



# Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

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JULY 2013

Conducted by the  
SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **A. Introduction**

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind's (SCCB) Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) assists South Carolina residents who are blind or visually impaired to develop the capacity to attain, regain and maintain employment. The purpose of this Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) is to assist in that effort, by providing a knowledge base on which SCCB can develop program improvement goals and strategies for the next three Federal fiscal years (FY). This will encompass October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2016.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, (The Act) mandates that each State VR agency conduct a comprehensive statewide assessment on a tri-annual basis to examine the rehabilitation needs of disabled residents. This study looks at the needs of South Carolinians who are blind or visually impaired, and places emphasis on the vocational rehabilitation needs of: those who are most significantly disabled, including their need for supported employment services; minorities and unserved or underserved groups; and, the needs of those who are served by other components of the statewide workforce investment system. Additionally, this study also examines the need to develop, expand or enhance the availability of services through community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within the State.

### **B. How the CSNA was Conducted**

Protocol for this CSNA followed the guidelines established in the Vocational Rehabilitation Needs Assessment Guide developed by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). As specified by the guidelines, a number of sources were used that include:

- Survey data from SCCB staff
- Survey information collected from SCCB consumers;

- Survey information from key informants
- Interviews with employers of blind or visually impaired workers
- Surveys from staff at the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center
- Data from the SCCB AWARE (Accessible Web-based Activity Reporting Environment) case management system
- SCCB 2010 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
- SCCB 2013 State Plan
- 2011 Annual Report from RSA
- SCCB Strategic Management Plan

To further amplify the data mentioned above, several national statistical reports were used. These included:

- Data from the 2009-2011 American Community Survey (ACS)
- Information from the 2012 Prevent Blindness USA Report
- Data from the 2010 U.S. Census Report

### **C. Findings**

- Based on data from the SCCB caseload, and survey and interview responses, there is clearly a need for SCCB to take actions to increase both the quantity and quality of competitive outcomes for consumers that exit the VR program.
- Available statistical and caseload data referenced in this report supports the need for SCCB to develop strategies to reach out to the Hispanic and Native American populations in South Carolina to make these groups aware of the services offered by SCCB VR.

- Data indicates that there is clearly a need for SCCB to continue its efforts to ensure that all potentially eligible blind/visually impaired in South Carolina have knowledge of the program, and can access its services, with emphasis on rural areas of the State, and counties where services are provided to a small number of consumers.
- SCCB maintains a regular presence with other components of the statewide workforce system. Steps should be taken to ensure that legal responsibilities (e.g., make sure Memorandums of Understanding) are up to date.
- Data from the SCCB caseload, and survey and interview responses, indicate that SCCB should closely examine the need to expand VR services and offer these services through local community rehabilitation programs in South Carolina. VR Counselors, while not able to provide actual numbers, said that there are consumers in their caseloads that are either waiting or admission to the EBMRC, or unable/unwilling to travel to Columbia to receive EBMRC services, no matter how great their need is.

Consumers that need adjustment to blindness services, particularly orientation and mobility, home management and braille can only obtain these services at the EBMRC or through the SCCB mobile outreach program. This program has only three teams that must cover the entire state of South Carolina. EBMRC is the only residential program in the state that can provide intensive adjustment to blindness services. Further, there are no programs that provide specialized skills training and exposure to work experiences to better prepare consumers to enter competitive employment.

## II. RESULTS OF DATA COLLECTION

### A. Population and Income Characteristics for South Carolina

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 data, the overall population of South Carolina was 4,625,364. As of April, 2012, the estimated population of the state was 4,723,723, showing a change of 2.1%. South Carolina is fairly evenly distributed by sex. 51.3% of the population are females and 48.7% are males.

During the period 2009-2011, the American Community Survey (ACS) showed that there are 1,758,732 households in South Carolina. The median household income was reported to be \$44,587 and the median per capita income was \$23,865. The current unemployment rate in South Carolina (Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2013) is 8.0%. The percentage of South Carolinians living below the poverty level was 17% according to the ACS for the 2009-2011 period.

### B. Ethnic Breakdowns in SC Compared to the U.S.

Table II.B.1, below, shows the ethnic distribution of South Carolina, as of April, 2011, compared with the nation (ACS, April, 2011).

Ethnic Group Comparative Data		
Ethnic Group	South Carolina	Other States
White	68.4%	78.1%
Black	28.1%	13.1%
Native American	0.5%	1.2%
Asian	1.4%	5%
Native Hawaiian	0.1%	0.2%
Hispanic	5.3%	16.7%
Bi-Racial	1.5%	2.3%

### **C. Types of Employment in South Carolina**

The ACS produces information regarding various categories of employment. The following table shows these, and how South Carolina compares to the nation (Table II.C.1):

<b>Types of Employment Comparative Data</b>		
<b>Types of Employment</b>	<b>South Carolina</b>	<b>U.S.A.</b>
Management/Business	32%	35.7%
Service Occupations	17.5%	17.7%
Sales and Office Work	25.2%	25.1%
Natural Resources, Construction and Maintenance Work	10.5%	9.5%
Production and Transportation Work	14.7%	10.2%

### **D. Education and Health Care**

Educationally, the ACS (2009-2011) shows that 83.6% of South Carolinians have a high school degree. 24.2% have a Bachelor's degree, or higher.

With respect to health insurance (HI) coverage in South Carolina, a 2012 survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation indicates that 20% of South Carolinians are uninsured. The term health insurance for this study is inclusive of employment based insurance, Medicare and Medicaid and private types of insurance.

In July, 2004, the Palmetto Project of Charleston, SC conducted a study entitled, "Covering the Uninsured of South Carolina." This study showed that in the year 2000, over 17% of South Carolina residents lacked health insurance.

### **E. What can be concluded from the Data?**

- The state is increasing in overall population (2.1% from 2010-2012) at a slightly faster rate than the rest of the nation (1.7%).



- There is a slightly higher percentage of females in South Carolina (51.3%) than in the other states (50.8%).
- Ethnic breakdowns comparing South Carolina to the rest of the US show that South Carolina has a much lower percentage of white residents than the nation as a whole, and has a considerably higher percentage of black residents. Further, South Carolina has considerably fewer Hispanic and Asian residents than national state averages.
- Household and individual income data, as well as data for those living below the poverty line, show some significant differences between South Carolina and the rest of the US. The median household income in South Carolina (\$44,587) is significantly lower than that for the rest of the states (\$52,762). The same is true when comparing individual median income in South Carolina (\$23,854) with the other states (\$27,915). South Carolina's percentage of those living at or below the federal poverty level (FPL), 17%, is higher than the national average of 14.3%.
- The unemployment rate in South Carolina, 8%, remains slightly higher than the national average of 7.5%, as of April, 2013. The unemployment rate in South Carolina has decreased substantially from a high of 10.9% in December, 2010 to the present level.
- Despite the highly rural nature of South Carolina, it remains fairly consistent with the country in terms of the percentage of the workforce engaged in the very broad employment categories selected by the ACS for analysis.
- South Carolinians tend to have a lower percentage of residents with high school and advanced levels of education. Nationally, 85.4% of the population has a high school diploma; compared with 83.6% in South Carolina. 28.2% of the population has attained a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 24.2% in South Carolina.
- With respect to health care coverage, South Carolina, with a current rate of 20% of uninsured residents, does not have the

highest rate in the nation (Texas currently has an uninsured rate of 25%), but is still higher than the national average of 16%.

### **III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLIND/VISUALLY IMPAIRED POPULATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

#### **A. General**

In 2012, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) published a report entitled “Statistical Facts About Blindness in the United States (2011)”. The statistics provided in this report are derived from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2009-2011, as interpreted by Cornell University’s Employment and Disability Institute (EDI). The report concludes that there were a total of 6,636,900 non-institutionalized individuals who reported a visual difficulty. Of these, 3,372,400 were between 18 and 64 (the age range most likely to participate in the VR Program). For the state of South Carolina, the study shows that 120,100 non-institutionalized persons reported some degree of visual impairment. Of these, 65,100 were between 18 and 64.

While this number may be viewed as a baseline for the number of South Carolinians with a visual loss, there are some important points that must be made. First, the NFB study acknowledges that all figures surrounding blindness are estimates, and there are several interpretations for the meaning of blindness itself. Secondly, the ACS and other national government reports and surveys are based on self-reporting and self-understanding of the term “severe vision problem”.

Thirdly, and most importantly, while there may actually be 120,100 persons in South Carolina with a vision problem, not all of these are necessarily individuals that SCCB would serve in its VR Program. VR is an eligibility based program that is intended to assist blind and visually impaired consumers prepare for, attain, regain and maintain employment. Although the VR Program does not have any upper age limits, all applicants must meet specific eligibility requirements and indicate an intent to go to work. The eligibility requirements can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 34, Part 361.42. (Both the regulatory section and the SCCB VR Policy Manual section on eligibility are in the appendices of this report.)

Although there are acknowledged limitations to the ACS and other public data sources such as the U.S Census Report and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), these sources use sophisticated techniques for extrapolating information to the entire population and are generally careful to report their margin of error. For these reasons, the figures used in this report can provide some good baseline information on which to project characteristics of blind and visually impaired residents of South Carolina. In general, and unless otherwise stated, the number of 65,100, that represents non-institutionalized individuals between 18-64 and is the most current figure available, will be used in the tables that follow.

### **B. Blindness/Visual Impairments and Ethnicity in SC**

Based on the assumption that there are 65,100 working age, visually impaired, non-institutionalized persons in South Carolina, the ACS shows the following ethnic breakdown for 2011 (Table III.B.1):

2011 ACS Study – SC Ethnic Breakdown		
Ethnicity	Number	%
White	35,200	54.07%
Black	27,900	42.86%
Hispanic	1,900	2.92%
All Other Races*	100	.15%
Total	65,100	100%

\*Sample size too small to make state projection

This information will be further analyzed in this report when the actual ethnic representation in the SCCB caseload is displayed.

### **C. Blindness/Visual Impairment and Poverty in South Carolina**

As stated earlier in this report, the ACS indicates that 17%, or about 391,500 South Carolinians live at or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). For 2009-2010 this was \$10,830 for an individual. The amount was raised to \$10,890 in 2011. If these figures are carried through to South Carolinians with a visual impairment, then 20,417 persons would be living at or below the FPL.

However, this is not the case according to the ACS. Table III.C.1, below, shows that South Carolinians with a visual impairment live at or below the FPL, or somewhat above it at a higher rate than persons in the state who do not have a disability.

South Carolina Federal Poverty Level Data		
% of FPL	Number with Visual Impairment (ACS)	Total %
.0-.99% FPL	28,392	43.61%
1.00-1.99% FPL	35,291	54.21%

This data illustrates that for 2011, non-institutionalized blind/visually impaired South Carolinians between the ages of 18-64 lived with an income of \$10,890 or less at a rate that was over 12% higher than the state average of 31.36%.

#### **D. Blindness/Visual Impairment and Unemployment Rates in South Carolina**

The NFB report, referenced earlier, looked at employment rates for persons with visual impairments. According to the ACS, the overall unemployment rate for persons who are of working age and reported a visual impairment is 63.2%. For all ages, the number of persons with visual impairments was 6,636,900. Of this total, 3,372,400 were considered to be of working age (18-64) which represents 50.81% of the total number of individuals reporting a visual impairment.

In South Carolina, the ACS data for 2011 shows that of the 65,100 working age South Carolinians with a visual disability, a total of 21,200 were working (an employment rate of 32.56%). Based on this data, visually impaired South Carolinians have an unemployment rate of 67.44% which is higher than the national average of 63.2%.

### **E. Blindness/Visual Impairment and Education Levels in South Carolina**

The ACS report for 2011 (interpreted by the Cornell Institute on Employment and Disability) cited above looked at educational levels for visually impaired persons of all ages. The data displayed below has been extrapolated from this report to provide estimates of visually impaired South Carolinians and their educational attainment between the ages of 21-64 (Table III.E.1).

<b>SC Visually Impaired Education Levels</b>		
Educational Level	Number in South Carolina	% in South Carolina
Less than High School	17,500	27.69%
High School	23,600	37.34%
Some College	18,500	29.27%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	3,600	5.70%
<b>Total (ages 21-64)</b>	<b>63,200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data from the ACS for 2011 suggests that visually impaired South Carolinians are less educated than the state average. 83.6% of the state's population is at least high school educated, compared with 72.32% of those who are blind/visually impaired. 24.2% of South Carolinians have a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 5.7% of blind/visually impaired.

### **F. Blindness/Visual Impairments and Health Care Coverage in South Carolina**

Health Insurance (HI) status for working age blind/visually impaired persons was considered by the NFB in its report. The following, Table III.F.1, shows the various types of coverage, including uninsured status, for blind/visually impaired South Carolinians, ages 21-64.

<b>SC Health Insurance Data</b>		
<b>Insured/Uninsured</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Uninsured	16,000	25.32%
Insured	47,200	74.68%
<b>Health Insurance Provider*</b>		
Through Employment	19,400	41.1%
Self-Purchased	5,200	11.02%
Medicare	15,200	32.2%
Medicaid	19,000	40.25%
Veterans Administration	4,800	10.17%
Indian Health Care	100	.21%

\*Some individuals reported more than one type of insurance coverage

Comparative data for all of these categories was not looked at. However, it is known that the overall percentage of uninsured persons in South Carolina currently stands at 17%. Therefore, blind/visually impaired residents of South Carolina are 8% less likely to have HI coverage of any type, than the state as a whole.

#### **G. Prevalence of Visual Conditions for South Carolina**

Prevent Blindness America publishes a report that shows the prevalence of visual conditions, many of which can lead to severe or total vision loss. The following, Table III.G.1, shows the incidence of these conditions in South Carolina:

<b>SC - Estimated Number of Cases by Vision Problem Age ≥ 40</b>	
Total Population ≥ 40	2,179,707
Vision Impairment & Blindness	56,631
Blindness	18,423
Vision Impairment	38,208
Refractive Error	
Myopia ≥ 1.0 diopters	500,664
Hyperopia ≥ 3.0 diopters	211,085
AMD (age-related macular degeneration, age 50 and older)	28,172
Cataract	368,562
Diabetic Retinopathy	114,307

Glaucoma	45,841
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This information is helpful only as a snapshot of the incidence of most common vision problems for persons over age 40 in South Carolina. More precise data about the age group 18-64 is not readily available.



## IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCCB CASELOAD

### A. Sources of Data

1. **RSA Annual Review Report**: Each year RSA produces an Annual Review Report for state VR agencies. The report is based on information from the following reports:
  - **RSA-2**  
An annual VR program and cost report. One report is submitted each fiscal year by each agency.
  - **RSA-113**  
A quarterly cumulative caseload report. Since four reports are submitted each year, RSA uses data from the report submitted in the fourth quarter (July 1 through Sept. 30).
  - **RSA-722**  
Annual report on appeals process. One report is submitted each fiscal year by each agency.
  - **RSA-911**  
The case service report. One report is submitted each year for each individual whose case was closed. For this report, RSA aggregates data from all of the RSA-911 reports submitted by the agency for the fiscal year.
  - **SF-425**  
A semi-annual federal financial report. Since two reports are submitted each year, RSA uses data from the report submitted for the second semi-annual report (April 1 through Sept. 30) of the fiscal year.

Note: The original source data for the Annual Review Report may be viewed on-line in the RSA Management Information

System (RSA-MIS). From the RSA-MIS, select *Main Menu* then select *Data Entry* to view the reports submitted by the agency (note: the RSA-911 data shown in the RSA-MIS is aggregated data). The *Ad Hoc Query* feature (on the *Quick Queries* menu) can be used to verify national averages. The most current Annual Review Report is from FY 2011. The data shown in the tables below for FY 2011 is from this report.

2. SCCB AWARE: In addition to data from the FY 2011 Annual Review Report, data for federal FYs 2012 and 2013 (through 6/7/2013) was collected from SCCB's AWARE case management system that was launched in July, 2011. This is a comprehensive management information system (MIS) that can produce caseload data on a daily basis.

## **B. SCCB Caseload Data**

The tables below provide an overview of key aspects of SCCB's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, and where possible, compare SCCB with all other VR agencies serving only blind/visually impaired consumers. Included in these tables is information summarizing:

- Total funds expended (state and federal) in FYs 2011 and 2012 and partial data for FY 2013;
- Caseload Data: case closure information (successful and unsuccessful), competitive and non-competitive employment data, earnings, types of employment outcomes;
- Services provided to VR consumers (purchased or provided by SCCB staff) ; and
- Special populations' data.

**Table IV.B.1**

Table IV.B.1 provides highlights of SCCB caseload data from 10/01/2010-6/07/2013:

<b>SCCB Caseload Data Highlights (Closed Cases)</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013*</b>
Total funds expended on VR and SE	\$8,491,915	\$8,056,795	\$ 6,559,962
Individuals whose cases were closed <b>with</b> employment outcomes	279	257	144
Individuals whose cases were closed <b>without</b> employment outcomes	118	244	114
Total number of individuals whose cases were closed after receiving services	397	356	293
Individuals whose cases were closed with supported employment outcomes	—	—	—
Average cost per employment outcome	\$2,720.47	\$3,249.60	\$2,825.56
Average cost per unsuccessful employment outcome	\$1,879.17	\$931.29	\$514.42
Average hourly earnings for competitive employment outcomes	\$11.50	\$11.17	\$11.05
Average state hourly earnings	\$18.55	\$19.96	\$20.19
Percent average hourly earnings for competitive employment outcomes to state average hourly earnings	61.99%	55.96%	54.73%
Average hours worked per week for competitive employment outcomes	31.11	32.57	54.73
Percent of transition age served to total served	9.57%	7.30%	8.04%
Average time(months) between application and closure for individuals with competitive employment outcomes	18.30	17.23	19.63

\*As of 6/7/2013

Analysis of data from these highlights suggests the following:

- Although data for FY 2013 is incomplete, the number of employment outcomes (competitive and non-competitive) for SCCB appears to be declining.
- The number of unsuccessful outcomes (cases served without a competitive or non-competitive employment outcome) increased significantly in FY 2012, but partial data for FY 2013 reflects that unsuccessful outcomes may not be as high as the FY 2012 level at the end of this fiscal year. (Competitive employment is defined in the overview for Table IV.B.4 below.)
- Since FY 2011, SCCB is expending more dollars per case for successful employment outcomes, and significantly fewer dollars for unsuccessful cases.
- Average hours worked per week are increasing. Partial data for FY 2013 reflects that the average hours worked has almost doubled since FY 2011.
- The average hourly wage for successful outcomes appears to be slightly decreasing from \$11.50 in 2011 to \$11.05 in 2013 (partial FY).
- The number of months that a consumer with a competitive employment outcome spends with SCCB between application and closure decreased in FY 2012, and appears to be increasing above the FY 2011 average of 18.30 months to 19.63 months for FY 2013 (partial data).
- SCCB has not been serving supported employment consumers.

**Table IV.B.2**

Table IV.B.2 includes some of the same data, but **adds information about applicants** for SCCB services and total numbers served.

SCCB Caseload Closure Data (Including Applicants)						
Category	2011	Percent increase or decrease from prior year	2012	Percent increase or decrease from prior year	2013*	Percent increase or decrease from prior year
Applicants	633	+1.0%	644	+1.74%	472	
Individuals served	1,160	-1.0%	1123	-3.19%	1,182	
Closed after receiving services	397	-4.6%	331	-16.62%	258	
Closed with employment outcomes	279	+4.9%	257	-7.89%	144	
Closed without employment after receiving services	118	-21.3%	99	-16.10%	149	

\*FY 2013 – partial data through 6/7/2013

The additional data suggests:

- Applications for SCCB services slightly increased from FY 2011 to 2012, and it appears that the increase will be even larger for FY 2013 if applications in the last four months of FY 2013 continue at the same rate.
- The total numbers of consumers served decreased from FY 2011-2012, but is already higher for FY 2013.

**Table IV.B.3**

Table IV.B.3 provides information on the number of individuals with disabilities receiving services, either provided directly or paid for by SCCB, for each major type of VR service. This information is taken from the RSA-2 report and captures all consumers receiving services in reported categories in the federal fiscal year covered by the report.

<b>Number of Individuals Receiving Major VR Services</b>						
<b>Category</b>	<b>Individuals served 2011</b>	<b>Increase or decrease from prior year</b>	<b>Individuals served 2012</b>	<b>Increase or decrease from prior year</b>	<b>Individuals served 2013*</b>	<b>Increase or decrease from prior year</b>
Assessment (purchased only)	145	-54	141	-4	100	
Placement (purchased only)	0	no change	0	no change	0	
Treatment of physical and mental impairments	318	-128	450	+132	301	
Postsecondary education	64	-42	56	-8	41	
Other training and education	297	+12	69	-228	69	
Assistance with living expenses	18	-4	76	+58	15	
Transportation	174	+72	152	-22	47	
Personal assistance, reader, or interpreter services	5	-1	1	-4	8	
Rehabilitation technology services	210	-27	187	-23	122	
All other services	123	-4	197	-74	129	

\*Closed cases as of 6/7/2013

With respect to services provided, the following observations are offered:

- The number of purchased assessment services slightly decreased from FY 2011-2012, but partial data through 6/7/2013 indicates that SCCB will meet or exceed FYs 2011 and 2012 levels for purchased assessments before the end of FY 2013.
- Physical/Mental restoration services provided increased significantly from FY 2011-2012. Based on FY 2013 data reported through 6/7/2013, the final numbers of consumers receiving these services in FY 2013 will, most likely, also exceed the FY 2011 level and come close to the number of individual receiving these services in FY 2012.
- Provision of post-secondary education services decreased from FY 2011-2012. Data also showed that these services decreased significantly from FY 2010 – 2011. By analyzing data available through 6/7/2013, unless SCCB increases the number served by at least 15 before the end of FY 2013, postsecondary education services will have decreased for three (or more) years.
- Provision of other types of training decreased from 297 in FY 2011 to 69 in FY 2012 (77%), but appears to be on the increase for FY 2013. As of 6/7/2013, data reflects that the exact number of individuals receiving other types of training in FY 2012 have already received these services in FY 2013.
- Provision of rehabilitation technology services decreased from FY 2011-2012. As of 6/7/2013, available data reflects that SCCB may continue to see a decrease in the provision of these services.
- Assistance with living expenses increased 322% from FY 2011 – 2012. Data available as of 6/7/2013 reflects that these services have considerably decreased in FY 2013 and will, most likely, stabilize close to the FY 2011 level.

**Table IV.B.4**

Table IV.B.4 provides information about average hours worked per week and average hourly wages for SCCB consumers closed after achieving a competitive employment outcome. Competitive employment means work <sup>(i)</sup> in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting; and <sup>(ii)</sup> for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. (See definitions in Appendix A of this report.)

Since the RSA 911 data for FYs 2012 and 2013 is not yet available, national data for all agencies serving blind/visually impaired is not displayed.

SCCB Competitive Employment Data			
Category	Competitive employment 2011	Competitive employment 2012	Competitive employment 2013*
Average hours worked per week	31.11	32.57	26.92
National average for blind agencies hours worked per week	30.94		
Average hourly earnings	\$11.50	\$11.17	\$11.05
National average hourly earnings for blind agencies	\$14.33		

\*As of 6/7/2013

From this table it can be suggested:

- For FY 2011, SCCB consumers worked slightly more hours than the national average for other VR agencies serving only blind/visually impaired consumers.
- Based solely on FY 2011 data, SCCB consumers closed in competitive employment earned wages almost \$3.00 below the national average for all blind agencies.



**Table IV.B.5**

Table IV.B.5 provides information about the types of employment outcomes SCCB consumers enter after receiving VR services.

<b>SCCB – Types of Employment Outcomes</b>							
Type of employment	2011	Percent of agency total	National average for blind agencies	2012	Percent of agency total	National average for blind agencies	2013*
Employment without supports in an integrated setting	206	73.84%	75.63%	173	67.32%		103
Employment with supports in an integrated setting	—	—	3.14%	—	—		—
Self-employment	11	3.94%	8.99%	16	6.23%		11
BEP	5	1.79%	1.31%	7	2.72%		2
Homemaker and unpaid family worker	57	20.43%	10.67%	61	23.74%		28

\*As of 6/7/2013

From these data, it can be inferred that:

- For FY 2011, SCCB closed a lower percentage of consumers with competitive employment outcomes than similar VR agencies. SCCB's percentage of competitive closures dropped a little over 5% in FY 2012. Comparative data that provides the national average closure percentage for FY 2012 is not available from RSA at this time.
- For FY 2012, SCCB closed consumers as homemakers at almost twice the national average for other agencies that serve only blind/visually impaired consumers. Both the number and

percentage of consumers closed as homemakers increased in FY 2012 for SCCB. Although the term “homemaker” is not defined in federal regulations, RSA interprets it as “men and women whose activity is keeping house for persons in their households or for themselves if they live alone.”

#### **Table IV.B.6**

RSA has identified several groups of consumers as special populations. These are youth transitioning from school to work (ages 14-24), consumers over age 65, and consumers who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits on the basis of blindness.

Table IV.B.6, using information from the FY 2011 Annual Report, provides information about these special populations.

<b>SCCB Special Population Data – FY 2011</b>				
Special population	Number	Increase or decrease from prior year	Percent of agency total	National average for blind agencies
Transition age (14-24)	38	-12	9.57%	13.12%
Over 65	4	-2	1.01%	5.69%
SSI recipients	60	-6	15.11%	21.97%
SSDI beneficiaries	124	-41	31.23%	32.17%

Based on this data, it can be said for FY 2011:

- SCCB served a lower percentage of consumers in all four groups than other VR agencies that serve only blind/visually impaired consumers.
- With respect to serving SSDI consumers, SCCB is within 1 percentage point of the national average for similar VR agencies.

**Table IV.B.7**

Table IV.B.7 provides data applicable to the employment rates for special populations based on information from the RSA 2011 Annual Review Report.

<b>SCCB Special Populations Employment Rate Data</b>			
Special population	Employment rate	Change from prior year	National average for blind agencies
Transition age (14-24)	31.58%	+3.58%	49.18%
Over 65	100.00%	+16.67%	78.76%
SSI recipients	43.33%	-3.64%	50.17%
SSDI beneficiaries	68.55%	+10.37%	60.31%

The data shows that:

- For the transition and SSI populations, SCCB has a lower rate of employment than the national average for similar agencies.
- SCCB exceeds the national average in the employment rate for SSDI beneficiaries.

**Table IV.B.8**

Table IV.B.8 provides information about the FYS 2011 and 2012 staffing of SCCB.

<b>SCCB Staff</b>								
Type	FY 2011	Increase or decrease from prior year	Percent of agency total	National average for blind agencies	FY 2012	Increase or decrease from prior year	Percent of agency total	National average for blind agencies*
Administrative staff	19	-9	15.83%	17.67%	22	+3	19.30%	
Counselor staff	28	+15	23.33%	30.45%	28	No change	24.56%	
Support staff	56	-14	46.67%	42.44%	50	-6	43.86%	

Other staff	17	-1	14.17%	9.44%	14	-3	12.28%	
Total staff	120	-9	100%	100%	114	-6	100%	

## **V. RESPONSES TO SURVEYS, PUBLIC MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS**

### **A. General**

During 2013, SCCB conducted a number of surveys, public meetings and interviews to gather additional information for this comprehensive needs assessment. The following summarizes the comments and responses made by consumers, staff of SCCB, and other stakeholders and key informants.

### **B. Results from Consumer Surveys**

In March 2013, SCCB mailed 1,257 invitations to participate in a survey to all 330 current consumers in the SCCB caseload and 927 former consumers (closed with and without an employment outcome). 42 invitations were returned as undeliverable and 38 (3.13%) responses were returned. Recipients of the invitation were informed that they could complete the survey by mail, electronically or by a telephone interview.

The survey instrument (see Appendix B) was based on a model suggested by RSA in its guide for conducting the CSNA. It asks respondents to rate a series of twenty questions concerning their VR experience from “extremely well” to “not at all” in terms of their satisfaction level. The instrument also provides room for narrative comments.

The low response rate is somewhat disappointing, as it may not be representative of the views of a majority of consumers. However, the following summarizes the responses received.

- In general, the respondents were satisfied with their experience with SCCB (86.1% satisfied as compared with 13.9% neutral or not satisfied). The narrative comments provided were very brief, and offered remarks that were complimentary of the treatment received from the VR Counselor, although several consumers questioned the sufficiency of counselor staff and the time that counselors are able to spend with consumers.
- Most consumers that responded to the survey felt that their VR Counselor was knowledgeable, and responsive to their needs.

Several expressed appreciation for the VR services that they were provided, and the respect with which they were treated.

- Of the small number of consumers that responded to the survey, 29.8% indicated that the services received from SCCB had a positive impact on their finding employment. However, 70.2% indicated that they felt that SCCB had a neutral, or no, impact on their ability to find work.
- Timeliness of VR services and communication with the VR Counselor were most often mentioned as changes that SCCB could make to improve service delivery. Several consumers said that they had experienced delays in receipt of needed assistive technology devices, and one consumer said that they had been assigned four different VR Counselors in four years. Again, the narrative comments were very brief and did not include specific details regarding concerns.

For the specific responses to each survey question, please refer to Appendix D of this report.

## **Consumer Responses (Key Issues)**

- Communication
- Timeliness of Services
- Sufficiency of Counselor Staff

### **C. Surveys of VR Counselors**

All 14 of the SCCB VR Counselors on staff in March 2013 responded to a survey (see Appendix B) for this report. Their responses were as follows:

VR Counselor Survey Responses				
Questions	Number of Responses	% Yes	Number of Responses	% No
Are there unmet needs for significantly disabled consumers?	12	85.2%	2	14.3%
Are there unmet needs for most significantly disabled consumers?	12	85.2%	2	14.3%
Are there unmet needs for minorities?	10	71.4%	4	28.6%
Are there unserved populations?	10	71.4%	4	28.6%
Are there underserved populations?	10	71.4%	4	28.6%
Is there a need to expand community rehabilitation programs?	11	78.6%	3	21.4%

For each “yes” response to these questions, VR Counselors were asked to provide information on what barriers existed, and what SCCB could do to address the barriers. A summary of responses follows.

#### Unmet Needs for Individuals with Significant Disabilities

- Almost without exception VR Counselors identified transportation as a major barrier for significantly disabled consumers. It was pointed out that South Carolina is highly rural, and there is very little public transportation available.
- Several VR Counselors stated that there is a need to collaborate better with the South Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, particularly when consumers have disabilities in addition to blindness or visual impairments. A respondent summed up this point up by stating, “I think there are instances where a consumer can best be served by both SCCB and SCVRD. I have consumers who I have referred and they were told because they are blind call SCCB. We offer many services related to blindness, but we don't have services to assist our blind consumer who also has Asperger's Syndrome” to help them reach their goals.”

- At least four respondents said that there was need to add staff to the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation (EBM) Center so that consumers could access their services in a timelier manner. They added that there were very few local resources to provide needed adjustment to blindness services or technology training. The EBM facility is viewed as the only place in South Carolina where comprehensive services can be obtained, and, it is not always possible for consumers to leave home for the services they need.

### Unmet Needs of Most Severely Disabled Individuals

- Again, respondents overwhelmingly identified the need for accessible transportation as a barrier for severely disabled persons.
- Five of the respondents reiterated that regionally-based adjustment to blindness training, such as training available at the EBM Center in Columbia is critical. They cited lack of family support for the consumer to leave home, and lengthy wait times for acceptance to the EBM Center as problematic for maintaining consumer interest in the VR program. One respondent stated, “Many more critical assessments are needed for this population. We need to assess these consumers to determine appropriate employment outcome – or if an employment outcome is even a realistic expectation. We need to provide more localized training in the environments and communities that our consumer’s live.”
- The need to expand the SCCB Outreach program was cited as a potential step that SCCB could take to address some of the issues around the need for localized training. This program currently has only two mobile teams that offer adjustment, mobility and orientation and home management throughout the state.
- The need to better coordinate services with other agencies, particularly for the most significantly disabled consumers with multiple disabilities was also mentioned by several respondents.



- One respondent offered that use of volunteers or college interns to help consumers in local VR offices to conduct job searches and resume preparation might be an approach for SCCB to consider.
- With respect to the need for supported employment services, there were several comments that the need for SCCB to have Job Coaches available is critical. One VR Counselor said that there is confusion about what Supported Employment is and who is eligible. There were other statements that the need for comprehensive assessments is critical, and there is a lack of localized facilities to obtain them.

### Unmet Needs of Minorities

- There were relatively few comments related to this question. Several respondents indicated that there is a need for translator services for non-English speaking consumers. One respondent stated that SCCB should be active in attending conferences where minority groups are expected to be present to provide information about the VR program. Two respondents said that the SCCB staff could benefit from sensitivity training to better inform them about the needs of diverse ethnic groups.
- There were no comments that indicated a belief that minority groups are excluded from SCCB services.

### Unserved /Underserved Populations

- Most respondents felt that there are clearly unserved visually impaired individuals who could benefit from the SCCB VR program. One respondent stated, "There is a significant gap in rural areas, those without support/advocacy in the family, and a lack of referrals from doctors early on in a diagnosis to prepare for and address employment accommodations while individuals are still employed and valuable team members to their employers. Referrals too often come with a sense of desperation/last resort."
- Several respondents indicated that the medical community tends to refer persons to SCCB only when they lack health insurance to

pay for a needed medical service. Those with vision problems who can pay for their treatment are not referred and remain unaware of the many other services that SCCB can offer.

- Several respondents indicated that the Hispanic population is unserved.
- One respondent provided comments with respect to what SCCB could do to address barriers to the unserved and underserved, “There is a definite need for broadened public relations to be a part of the health and community fairs and travel to meet with specialists around the state for better education to support referral of the unserved and underserved.”
- Again, the need for “local rehabilitation centers and better transportation services” was addressed.
- Another respondent said that Social Security Disability beneficiaries and Supplemental Security recipients have a fear of losing their benefits, and remain unserved or underserved.

The top 6 issues that were common throughout the VR Counselor surveys were:

## **Counselor Responses (Key Issues)**

- **Transportation**
- **Need for Local Services**
- **Insufficient Service Delivery Staff**
- **Timeliness of Services**
- **Job Readiness, Training and Placement Resources**
- **Comprehensive Vocational Assessments**

#### **D. Survey Responses from Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center (EBMRC)**

Eleven staff members of the EBM Rehabilitation Center were surveyed. This facility in Columbia, SC, is a residential program that offers comprehensive adjustment to blindness and training services. The survey questions asked of this group was more limited in scope than the survey for VR Counselors. Respondents were not asked about unserved/underserved populations, the needs of those served by other components of the statewide workforce, or the need to expand CRP's. It was determined that this group of employees would have little experience in these areas.

Following is a summary of survey responses:

EBM Rehabilitation Center Survey Responses				
Questions	Number of Responses	% Yes	Number of Responses	% No
Are there unmet needs for significantly disabled consumers?	9	81.8%	2	18.2%
Are there unmet needs for most significantly disabled consumers?	8	80.0%	2	20.0%
Are there unmet needs for minorities?	6	75.0%	2	25.0%

Some of the comments offered by the EBM staff follow.

- Difficulties with transportation was, again, viewed as a critical barrier to employment ,
- Several respondents cited the need for more education services.
- Regarding the critical need for assessment, one respondent stated, "There needs to be greater emphasis placed on these individual daily living and adjustment skills because there is a direct parallel between personal adjustment skills and vocational outcomes. Our primary focus should be jobs, but it appears that we miss some of the basic essentials needed to success in the work force."

- With respect to services to minorities, the need for training in cultural diversity was suggested.
- The need for more outreach into rural areas of the state was suggested by several respondents.

## **EBM Staff Responses (Key Issues)**

- Transportation
- Personal Adjustment Skills
- Cultural Diversity Training
- Education
- Outreach (Rural Areas)

### **E. Responses from SCCB Senior Management Staff**

Eleven SCCB Senior Management staff were interviewed for their input. Comments are summarized below.

#### Service Needs for Blind Consumers, Barriers and Actions SCCB Can Take

- Transportation, training, assessment and technology services were most often identified by the respondents as needed services. One individual stated that consumers need, "...a Comprehensive Assessment in a timely manner to paint a realistic picture of where the consumer truly is in the rehabilitation process and to help in the determination for what services are needed to meet the consumer's employment and independent living goals."
- Almost all respondents stated that lack of transportation was the biggest barrier to blind/visually impaired consumers. Also identified was the lack of localized programs for adjustment and evaluation services.

- Respondents felt that SCCB should consider contracting for comprehensive assessment services, contracting for transportation, and ensuring that VR Counselors develop better skills to identify and provide all needed services

#### Needs of Most Significantly Disabled Consumers, Barriers and Actions SCCB Can Take

- The answers to these questions were very similar to the responses given above. Respondents felt that while SCCB staff are well qualified to meet the needs of blind/visually impaired consumers, they are less comfortable with those who have serious secondary and multiple disabling conditions.
- Several suggestions were made that SCCB should partner with other agencies, particularly the South Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, to meet the needs of consumers who are most severely disabled.

#### Needs of Unserved/Underserved Populations, Barriers and Actions SCCB Can Take

- There was a high level of consensus that there are both unserved and underserved populations in South Carolina. Most respondents felt that these individuals are located in very rural areas of the state. Several respondents also said that the Hispanic population is both unserved and underserved. One respondent said that the Native American population of South Carolina is not being served by SCCB.
- Barriers to reaching unserved/underserved groups were identified as lack of staffing to handle remote areas of the state, and unawareness of SCCB services in these areas.
- It was recommended that SCCB should increase outreach efforts to rural parts of the state. A respondent stated that the agency should improve and/or expand upon public awareness initiatives (i.e. increased participation in community health fairs, monthly vision screenings, placement of brochure displays with eye care professionals, church bulletins, and public libraries).

### Need for Supported Employment Services, Barriers and Actions SCCB Can Take

- All respondents, except for one, concurred that there is a need or supported employment services. Barriers to the provision of these services were identified as the lack of trained staff and general confusion about differentiates the Supported Employment program from the VR program.
- A respondent commented, “Although defined in Chapter 8 of the VR Manual, interpretation of the most significantly disabled; time constraints for VR Counselors to provide and/or coordinate ongoing support services; the availability of integrated settings or sheltered workshop settings for which the most significantly disabled can participate,” are barriers to providing supported employment services.
- All respondents agreed that SCCB should hire a qualified person to coordinate a supported employment program for the agency. Another suggestion was that SCCB should centralize a supported employment caseload under one VR Counselor and Coordinate services with the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) and the SCVRD when appropriate.

### Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System

There were very few comments in this area. Since SCCB serves only blind/visually impaired persons, the agency cannot provide much for participants in other programs who do not meet SCCB eligibility criteria.

### Need To Expand and Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)

- Without exception, all respondents agreed that there is a need to expand the availability of CRP services beyond the EBM Rehabilitation Center in Columbia
- Necessary funding to expand CRPs was the only barrier identified.

- Expansion of the services offered by Goodwill and through Centers for Independent Living were mentioned as possible options for SCCB to consider in order to expand CRP services. It was also suggested that the current mobile outreach program could be expanded to reach more consumers.

## **VR Counselor Responses (Key Issues)**

- Transportation
- Local Services
- Partnership with SCDVR (secondary disabling conditions)
- Training, Technology
- Outreach in Rural Areas
- Supported Employment
- Comprehensive Assessments

### **F. Comments from Public Meetings.**

During March, 2013, SCCB conducted six public meetings to obtain input for this report. Meetings were held in Columbia (2), Charleston, Aiken, Greenville and Florence. Advance notification for these meetings was provided through newspaper ads, the SCCB website and through the AWARE system. Many of the participants were SCCB consumers. As a result, most of the comments centered on concerns with the SCCB VR process.

The following is a summary of comments from these meetings.

- SCCB should strengthen communication between VR Counselors and consumers.
- VR services need to be provided in a timelier manner.
- More information about SCCB should be provided on its website.

- Confusion regarding the VR eligibility process was expressed.
- Some consumers expressed the need for more information about Plans for Achieving Self Support (PASS) and the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system.
- The CAP Director stated that due process procedures for consumers need to be clarified.
- At one meeting concerns were raised about the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).
- There was discussion about the need to establish peer groups in each district.

## **Public Meetings Comments (Key Issues)**

- Communication
- Timely Services
- Due Process Procedures
- Business Enterprise Program
- Peer Groups
- Information Related to Other Programs

### **G. Interviews with Employers**

- SCCB solicited comments from several employers that have hired SCCB consumers. Two of these employers, Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the Veterans Administration, responded to the survey.
- Both of these employers appeared well pleased with the SCCB consumers they have hired. They indicated that SCCB was responsive to their needs and questions, and provided them with qualified applicants.



## Employer Responses

- Qualified Applicants
- Well-pleased
- SCCB Responsive to Needs and Questions

### H. Interviews with Employment Consultants

SCCB has three Employment Consultants on staff. These employees are responsible for developing relationships with potential employers of SCCB consumers and assisting VR Counselors with job placement. A summary of their comments follows.

#### Needs of Significantly Disabled Consumers

##### General Comments

The ECs said that consumers need to be job ready, with good orientation & mobility skills, work habits, interviewing and interpersonal skills, and realistic expectations about work.

##### Barriers

Unrealistic vocational objectives and lack of understanding about how earnings affect receipt of SSDI/SSI benefits were identified as barriers.

##### Steps SCCB Can Take

Need to localize services.

## Employment Consultants (Key Issues)

- Job Readiness
- Benefits Analysis
- Local Services
- Unrealistic Vocational Objectives

### I. Interviews with SCCB Board of Commissioners

SCCB is an independent commission that is governed by a seven member Board of Commissioners (Board). These individuals are appointed by the Governor of South Carolina for a four year term. At this time, four Board members are blind.

Board members were interviewed to obtain their input for this report. The following is a summary of their responses.

#### VR Service Needs for Significantly Disabled, Barriers and Actions SCCB Can Take

- Several respondents indicated that assistance to consumers in finding good employment is a critical need. Job placement and the need for assistive technology services were also mentioned.
- Board members indicated that lack of good communication between the VR Counselor and consumer are a barrier.
- Also stated several times was the opinion that there are limited employment opportunities in South Carolina.
- Lack of transportation was also viewed as a barrier.
- Most respondents indicated that staff training is essential to ensure that consumers receive quality VR services.

### VR Service Needs for Most Severely Disabled, Barriers and Actions SCCB Can Take

Responses were generally the same as for the question above.

- Two respondents stated that SCCB VR Counselors may not be well-informed about how to work with consumers who have disabilities in addition to blindness/visual impairments.
- There were no additional barriers for this group than were mentioned above.
- Again, staff training was suggested as a step SCCB can take to address the needs of most severely disabled consumers.

### Needs of Unserved/Underserved Populations, Barriers and Steps SCCB Can Take

- All respondents agreed that there are most likely unserved and underserved groups of blind/visually impaired persons in South Carolina. No specific ethnic groups were mentioned and persons in rural areas of the state were identified as the most likely places where there are unserved and underserved groups.
- Lack of staff to cover rural areas and knowledge of the SCCB program were mentioned as barriers to meeting the needs of unserved and underserved groups.
- Addition of staff and insistence by SCCB management that rural areas be covered was offered as a step SCCB can take to address the needs of unserved and underserved populations.

### Need for Supported Employment, Barriers and Steps SCCB Can Take

- There was unanimous agreement among respondents that there is a need for supported employment services.

- Lack of trained staff to fill this need was identified as a barrier.
- Respondents indicated that SCCB should hire a qualified individual to coordinate supported employment services.

#### Need to Expand CRP's, Barriers and Steps SCCB Can Take

- All respondents concurred that there is a need to make CRP services available outside of the Columbia area.
- Funding for expansion of CRP's that can provide comprehensive adjustment to blindness services was viewed as a barrier.
- Aside from procurement of needed funding, no other actions to meet this need were offered.

### **SCCB Board of Commissioners (Key Issues)**

- Quality Employment/Job Placment
- 'Transportation
- Local Services
- Supported Employment
- Rural Outreach
- Insufficient Staff
- Staff Training/ Multiple Disabilities

#### **J. Responses from Stakeholders and Key Informants**

The following stakeholders were surveyed to obtain input:

- Directors of the two Rehabilitation Training Programs at South Carolina State University and the University of South Carolina
- Director of the South Carolina Client Assistance Program

- President of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of South Carolina
- Director of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) of South Carolina
- President of the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind
- Directors of two South Carolina Centers for Independent Living
- Seven Ophthalmologists and Optometrists who regularly treat and refer individuals to SCCB
- 15 additional former VR consumers (these individuals did not respond to the Consumer Survey but wished to provide input into the report)

The following is a summary of comments from this group.

### Unmet Needs of Significantly Disabled

#### General Comments

- Most respondents said that there is a need to secure good-paying jobs for consumers.
- Transportation, assistive devices, the need for low vision services and job placement were most often identified as service needs.
- Good and timely communication between the consumer and the VR Counselor were viewed as a critical need by many respondents.

#### Barriers

- Almost universally, respondents stated that lack of available transportation is a barrier.

- Several respondents stated that poor communication between consumers and VR Counselors is a barrier.
- A perception that there are available jobs is seen as a barrier, particularly among the consumers who did not obtain employment.

### Steps SCCB Can Take

- Several respondents said that VR Counselors need additional training to enable them to better advise consumers about their VR options.
- One consumer offered the following comment as a suggestion, “Consult with people that actually are blind or visually impaired to receive more ideas on how we can help consumers.”

### Unmet Needs of Most Severely Disabled

#### General Comments

Most respondents agreed that there are unmet needs for the most significantly disabled. They agreed that in order to offer services, there needs to be a good understanding of the overall person, and how secondary and multiple disabling conditions affect the ability to work.

#### Barriers

- Poor understanding of the impact of disabling conditions in addition to a visual impairment was seen as the major barrier to assisting consumers with the most severe disabilities.
- As has been stated above, the lack of transportation, particularly in rural areas of South Carolina was mentioned by many respondents as a deterrent to VR services.

- An eye care professional stated that denial of a disability was often a barrier to making a referral to SCCB for needed services.

### Steps SCCB Can Take

- It was often suggested by respondents that SCCB should provide training to VR Counselors to ensure that they are able to address the many needs of severely disabled consumers.
- Cooperative agreements with other state programs to address multiple needs of severely disabled consumers was stated as a strategy SCCB can take.

### Unmet Needs of Unserved/Underserved Populations

#### General Comments

- Respondents universally stated that they believed there are both unserved and underserved populations of blind/visually impaired persons in South Carolina. Almost all said that these groups were in the most rural parts of the state.
- One consumer described that he was from another country and had no knowledge of SCCB until a friend told him about the program.
- Eye care providers stated that they felt that older blind persons were both unserved and underserved.

#### Barriers

Lack of information and public awareness of SCCB and its services was overwhelmingly identified as the biggest barrier to reaching unserved and underserved groups.

### Steps SCCB Can Take

There were many suggestions that SCCB should launch an extensive public outreach campaign to make its services known. This would include use of media (especially radio), enhanced use of the agency website, and through more contacts with public agencies.

## Need for Supported Employment

### General Comments

There was a great deal of agreement among respondents that supported employment services are needed.

### Barriers

Lack of trained or qualified staff to provide supported employment services was most often identified as a barrier.

### Steps SCCB Can Take

- Many respondents suggested that SCCB hire a qualified staff person to coordinate supported employment services.
- Several respondents suggested that SCCB partner with other programs to provide supported employment services.
- The hiring or contracting with job coaches was also mentioned.

## Expansion and Improvement of CRPs

### General Comments

Almost without exception, respondents said that there is a need to expand CRP services into areas of the state outside of Columbia so that consumers can avail themselves of needed services without traveling long distances.

### Barriers



Funding required for expansion of CRP's was viewed as the biggest barrier to this need.

### Steps SCCB Can Take

Several respondents said that advocating with the state legislature for additional funds may help to obtain required funds.

## **Stakeholders and Key Informants Responses (Key Issues)**

- Transportation
- Communication
- Jobs
- Local Services
- Counselor Training/Multiple Disabilities
- Rural Outreach
- Supported Employment

## **VI. ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS BASED ON DATA FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM SURVEYS, PUBLIC MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS**

### **A. Needs of Significantly Disabled**

The information presented in this report suggests the following respective to significantly disabled consumers of SCCB VR:

- The data presented in this report shows that South Carolinians of working age (18-64) who are blind/visually impaired, when compared with non-disabled residents of the state are more likely to be living at or below the FPL, less educated, more unemployed, and less likely to have health insurance.
- RSA data and information from the SCCB AWARE system shows that since October 1, 2011, fewer consumers are exiting the program with an employment outcome. Also, the number of those exiting with a competitive employment outcome has decreased, and is lower than the national average of VR agencies that serve only blind/visually impaired consumers. At the same time, the number and percentage of consumers closed as homemakers is rising. This type of closure pays no wages.
- Data shows that hourly earnings for consumers with employment outcomes are significantly lower than the national average for similar VR agencies. Further, expenditures for services such as assessment, post-secondary and other training, and rehabilitation technology are decreasing. Such services can contribute greatly to a consumer's potential to obtain well-paying jobs.
- SCCB currently has 14 VR Counselors with caseloads (two VR Counselors are responsible for working with transition age consumers). Each of these Counselors is required to produce a given number of cases that result in an employment outcome; and there is a performance expectation that 80% of all employment outcomes be in competitive employment. There is also an expectation that no more than 10% of employment outcomes be homemakers.

- ACS data from 2011 estimates that there are 65,100 visually impaired South Carolinians between the ages of 18 and 64. Of these, 21,200 are reported to be employed. The ACS further estimates that there are 4,700 visually impaired persons who are not working, but have actively sought employment in the last 12 months. As of March, 2013, there were 320 persons in the SCCB caseload who had made application for SCCB VR services. While not all of the 43,900 working age visually impaired South Carolinians would be eligible for, or willing to participate in the SCCB VR program, it is logical to assume that there may be significant numbers of persons who could benefit from the program.

**CONCLUSION:** Based on data from the SCCB caseload, and survey and interview responses, there is clearly a need for SCCB to take actions to increase both the quantity and quality of competitive outcomes for consumers that exit the VR program.

#### **B. Needs of Most Severely Disabled Including the Need for Supported Employment**

At this time SCCB data shows that of the 847 VR cases where a determination of eligibility for VR services has been made, 809 are persons with a significant disability, and 38, or 4.7% are persons with a most significant disability. While the Rehabilitation Act specifically defines the term “individual with a significant disability,” it allows state VR agencies the flexibility to define the term “individual with a most significant disability.” SCCB defines an individual with a most significant disability as an individual:

- Who has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits two or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome;
- Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and

- Who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, muscular-skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), spinal cord conditions (including paraplegia and quadriplegia), sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, end - stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitation.

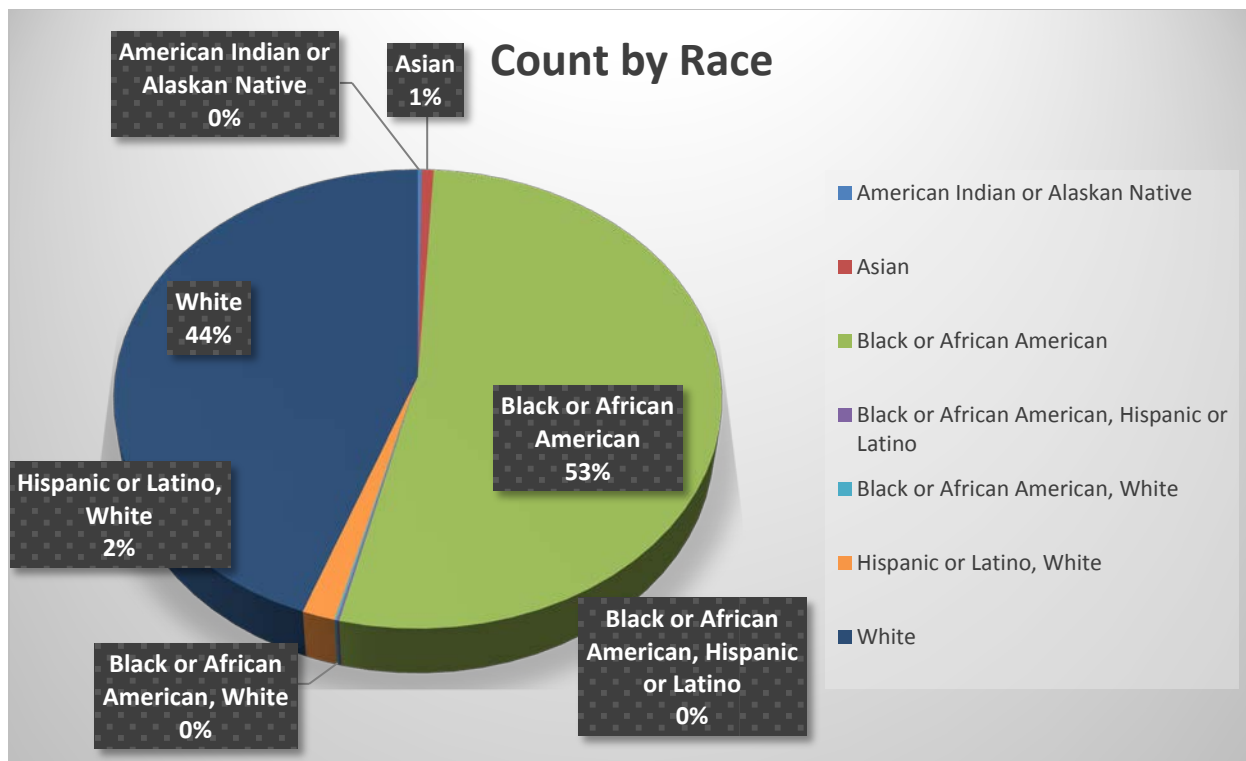
Information gathered from surveys and interviews shows that while SCCB staff feel confident to address issues around visual impairments, they feel less able to deal with severe secondary or multiple disabling conditions. This may be a cause of the low percentage of individuals with the most significant disabilities presently in the caseload.

SCCB does not provide supported employment services. None of the Title VI (supported employment) funds have been expended since FY 2011. SCCB VR Counselors have been provided training on the legal requirements for supported employment, but there is no formal process in place for the extended and long term support services that consumers need to be successful in supported employment.

**CONCLUSION:** Based on data from the SCCB caseload, and survey and interview responses, there is clearly a need for SCCB to expand services to most severely disabled consumers. This includes the need to develop and implement a supported employment program.

### **C. Services to Minorities**

The following chart displays the ethnic composition of the SCCB caseload as of 6/7/13.



It is clear from this information that African-Americans are well-represented in the SCCB caseload. However, Hispanics, given that data presented earlier shows there are 1,900 working aged, visually impaired Hispanics reported to be in South Carolina, are not. Further, while there is one federally-recognized Native American Nation in South Carolina (Catawba Indian Nation) and seven state-recognized tribes, these groups are not represented in the caseload.

**CONCLUSION:** Available statistical and caseload data referenced in this report supports the need for SCCB to develop strategies to reach out to the Hispanic and Native American populations in South Carolina to make these groups aware of the services offered by SCCB VR.

#### **D. Unserved/Underserved Populations**

Almost all respondents to surveys and interviews said they believe there are blind/visually impaired persons in South Carolina that are not currently being served by the program. Most respondents did not offer specific evidence in support of their belief. In addition to

identifying Hispanics and Native Americans as examples of unserved or underserved populations, most respondents stated that the highly rural areas of South Carolina were where unserved and underserved groups could be found.

The 2010 SCCB CSNA identified five counties in the state where no consumers were being served. SCCB initiated steps to increase outreach to these areas, and now reports that there are at least two consumers from each county. There are still a number of counties where there are reported to be five consumers or less. These are (but may not be limited to): Abbeville, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Chester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Hampton, Laurens, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, McCormick, Oconee, Saluda, and Williamsburg.

**CONCLUSION:** Data indicates that there is clearly a need for SCCB to continue its efforts to ensure that all potentially eligible blind/visually impaired in South Carolina have knowledge of the program, and can access its services, with emphasis on rural areas of the State, and counties where services are provided to a small number of consumers.

#### **E. Services to those Served by Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

This area received very little commentary from surveys, interviews and public meetings. Those who did respond appeared to interpret the question to relate to how blind/visually impaired persons were served by the South Carolina Works (formerly the One-Stop Centers). There are presently 12 SC Works Centers in South Carolina. Each VR Counselor is required to visit the sites in their location on a regular basis. VR Counselors generally meet with the SC Works Director and are available to interview clients of other agencies who have expressed interest in SCCB services. Intake information is obtained, and in cases where the individual is not an appropriate candidate for SCCB, referrals to other resources are offered. Training about SCCB VR programs, SCCB sponsored vision screenings, and disability awareness training are some of the activities VR Counselors may conduct or participate in at the SC Works Centers. Brochures regarding SCCB VR are readily available at SC Works Centers.

**CONCLUSION:** SCCB maintains a regular presence with other components of the statewide workforce system. Steps should be taken to ensure that legal responsibilities (e.g., make sure Memorandums of Understanding) are up to date.

#### **F. NEED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION FACILITIES**

Respondents to surveys and interviews overwhelmingly affirmed the need to expand vocational rehabilitation services to areas of the state outside of Columbia through the use of CRPs. As stated earlier in this report, the EBMRC is the only comprehensive adjustment to blindness and training program for blind/visually impaired persons in South Carolina. Smaller programs in Greenville, Charleston and Florence offer some training in the use of assistive technology, and two of these are prepared to conduct vocational assessments on a limited basis.

VR Counselors, especially, reiterated that the lack of localized programs that can offer the services blind/visually impaired consumers need, especially orientation & mobility, Braille and home management skills are a major deterrent to assisting consumers become work ready.

If consumers in need of comprehensive adjustment services cannot, or will not agree to participate in the EBMRC, the only option currently available is through the three mobile Outreach programs that must cover the entire state.

Other than the responses offered in surveys and interviews, there is no data-based evidence to show that there is truly an available pool of consumers who would avail themselves of localized vocational rehabilitation services if available at CRPs in other areas of the State. However, the number of respondents that identified this as a need is compelling.

**CONCLUSION:** Data from the SCCB caseload, and survey and interview responses, indicate that SCCB should closely examine the

need to expand VR services and offer these services through local community rehabilitation programs in South Carolina. VR Counselors, while not able to provide actual numbers, said that there are consumers in their caseloads that are either waiting or admission to the EBMRC, or unable/unwilling to travel to Columbia to receive EBMRC services, no matter how great their need is.

Consumers that need adjustment to blindness services, particularly orientation and mobility, home management and braille can only obtain these services at the EBMRC or through the SCCB mobile outreach program. This program has only three teams that must cover the entire state of South Carolina. EBMRC is the only residential program in the state that can provide intensive adjustment to blindness services. Further, there are no programs that provide specialized skills training and exposure to work experiences to better prepare consumers to enter competitive employment.



## **VII. APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

The following terms and definitions are common to the VR process, and have been used in this report. Where definitions refer to the Code of Federal Regulations, it specifically means Title 34-Education, Subpart B, Chapter III-Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, Part 361-The State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (34 CFR 361). Where applicable, the regulatory citation has been provided. Part 361, in its entirety, may be viewed at:

**<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-1999-title34-vol2/pdf/CFR-1999-title34-vol2-part361.pdf>**

#### **1. Assessment for Determining Eligibility and Vocational Rehabilitation Needs (pertinent parts)**

(A) Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, as appropriate in each case, means a review of existing data to determine if an individual is eligible for VR services...

(B) To the extent necessary, the provision of appropriate assessment activities to obtain necessary additional data to make the eligibility determination and assignment:

- To the extent additional data are necessary to make a determination of the employment outcomes and the nature and scope of VR services to be included in the IPE, a comprehensive assessment to determine the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, including the need for supported employment must be conducted;
  - The comprehensive assessment is limited to information that is necessary to identify the rehabilitation needs of the individual and to develop the IPE, and uses as a primary source of information, to the maximum extent possible existing information obtained for the purposes of

determining the eligibility and information that can be provided by the individual or by the family;

- A comprehensive assessment may include, to the degree needed to make such a determination, an assessment of the personality, interests, interpersonal skills, intelligence and related functional capacities, educational achievements, work experience, vocational aptitudes, personal and social adjustments, and employment opportunities of the individual;
- The medical, psychiatric, psychological, and other pertinent vocational, educational, cultural, social, recreational, and environmental factors that affect the employment and rehabilitation needs of the individual;
- An appraisal of the patterns of work behavior of the individual and services needed for the individual to acquire occupational skills and to develop work attitudes, work habits, work tolerance, and social and behavior patterns necessary for successful job performance, including the use of work in real job situations to assess and develop the capacities of the individual to perform adequately in a work environment, and
- A referral, for the provision of rehabilitation technology services to assess and develop the capacities of the individual to perform in a work environment...

Regulatory authority: 34CFR 361.5(b) (6)

## **2. Assistive Technology Device**

Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of an individual with a disability.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(7)

### **3. Assistive Technology Service**

Assistive technology service means any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device, including:

- The evaluation of the needs of an individual with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the individual in his or her customary environment;
- purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition by an individual with a disability of an assistive technology device;
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices, and
- Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(8)

### **4. Competitive Employment**

Competitive employment means work:

- That is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting, and
- For which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(11)

### **5. Eligibility For VR Services**

Eligibility for VR services means a determination that is based only on the following requirements:

- A determination by qualified personnel that the applicant has a physical or mental impairment;
- A determination by qualified personnel that the applicant's physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment for the applicant; and
- A determination by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by the designated State unit that the applicant requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment consistent with the applicant's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.42(a)

## **6. Employment Outcome**

Employment outcome means, retaining full-time or, if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market to the greatest extent practicable, supported employment, or any other type of employment including self-employment, telecommuting, or business ownership, that is consistent with an individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(16)

- 7. Employment rate** - The percentage of cases closed with employment outcomes compared to all cases closed after receiving service.
- 8. Employment with supports in an integrated setting** - Full time or part-time employment in an integrated setting with ongoing support services for individuals with most significant disabilities. For purposes of this report, compensation for such employment may be below, at, or above the minimum wage

**9. Employment without supports in an integrated setting** - Full-time or part-time employment in an integrated setting without ongoing support services. For purposes of this report, this is work performed for wages, salary, commissions, tips, or piece-rates, below, at, or above the minimum wage. This type of employment does not include self-employed individuals.

## **10. Extended Services**

Extended services means ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment and that are provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, from funds other than VR funds or supported employment funds after an individual with a most significant disability has made the transition from support provided by the VR agency.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b) (20)

**11. Homemaker** - Refers to men and women whose activity is keeping house for persons in their households or for themselves if they live alone.

## **12. Individual with a Disability**

Individual with a disability means an individual:

- Who has a physical or mental impairment;
- Whose impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and
- Who can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services?

## **12. Individual with a Most Significant Disability**

An individual with a most significant disability means an individual with a significant disability who meets SCCB's criteria for an individual with a most significant disability. These criteria must be consistent with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.36(d)(1) and (2).

## **13. Individual with a Significant Disability**

Individual with a significant disability means an individual with a disability who:

- Has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome;
- Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and
- Who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, muscular-skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), spinal cord conditions (including paraplegia and quadriplegia), sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitation.

## **14. Integrated Setting**

Integrated setting means:

- With respect to the provision of VR services, a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals.
- With respect to an employment outcome, a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals, other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals, to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with other persons.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(33)

## **15. Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)**

SCCB must assure in its State plan that:

- An individualized plan for employment (IPE) meeting the requirements of 34 CFR 361.45 and 34 CFR 361.46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services ...
- Services will be provided in accordance with the provisions of the IPE.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.45 and 34 CFR 361.46

## **16. On-going Support Services**

Ongoing support services, as used in the definition of Supported Employment, means services that are:

- Needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment;
- Identified based on a determination of the individual's need as specified in an IPE;
- Furnished by the VR agency from the time of job placement until transition to extended services, unless post-employment services are provided;
- Must include an assessment of employment stability and a provision of specific services or the coordination of services at or away from the worksite that are needed to maintain stability based on at a minimum, twice-monthly monitoring at the worksite of each individual in supported employment; and
- Must consist of:
  - Any particularized assessment supplementary to the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs;
  - The provision of skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job skill training at the work site;
  - Job development and training;
  - Social skills training;
  - Regular observation or supervision of the individual;
  - Follow-up services including regular contact with the employers, the individuals, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individuals, and other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement;
  - Facilitation of natural supports at the worksite; and



- Any other service identified in the scope of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals described in 34 CFR 361.48.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(38)

## **17. REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY**

Rehabilitation technology services means the systematic application of technologies, engineering methodologies, or scientific principles to meet the needs of, and address the barriers confronted by, individuals with disabilities in areas that include education, rehabilitation, employment, transportation, independent living, and recreation. The term includes rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology devices, and assistive technology services.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(45)

## **18. Supported Employment**

Supported employment means:

- Competitive employment in an integrated setting, or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive employment, consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities:
  - For whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and
  - Who, because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, need intensive supported employment services from the VR agency and extended services.

- Transitional employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(53)

## **19. Supported Employment Services**

Supported employment services means ongoing support services and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment that are provided by the VR agency:

- For a period of time not to exceed 18 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the rehabilitation counselor or coordinator jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment; and
- Following transition, as post-employment services that are unavailable from an extended services provider and that are necessary to maintain or regain the job placement or advance in employment.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54)

## **20. TRANSITION SERVICES**

Transition services means a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Transition services must promote or facilitate the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the student's IPE.

Regulatory authority: 34 CFR 361.5(b)(55)

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### Consumer Invitation Letter



## South Carolina Commission for the Blind

1430 CONFEDERATE AVENUE \* PO BOX 2467 COLUMBIA, SC 29202  
PHONE (803) 898-8731 \* or \* 1-800-922-2222 \* FAX (803) 898-8867

Dear Consumer,

You can help to improve the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program. Will you please complete a survey about your needs? There are questions about how the SCCB can help you get the services you need in order to choose, obtain or keep a job.

You can help us improve the VR program by answering a few questions. Answering the questions is voluntary and you may skip any item that you do not want to answer. Your answers are confidential and we do not need your name or address. By completing the survey, you are consenting to participate.

There are three ways to complete the survey. First is on the computer. You need to send an email to [survey@sccb.sc.gov](mailto:survey@sccb.sc.gov). In your email, all you need to write is *send me a survey*. After you send the email, you will receive a link. When you click on the link, it will direct to the survey.

The second way is to complete the survey using a paper copy. If you want a paper copy, call 1-800-922-2222 and a survey will be mailed to you. The phone call is free.

The third way is to use a reader. You may call 1-800-922-2222 and request a reader. The reader will call you and set a time to read the survey to you and write your response. The phone call is free.

If you have any question about the survey or your participation, then contact Mr. Marcus Bradley (1-800-922-2222 or email [survey@sccb.sc.gov](mailto:survey@sccb.sc.gov)) at the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. If you would like results of the survey, please contact us.

Your responses are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Don Bradley  
Director of Consumer Services

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### Consumer Survey Instrument

**1. How well do the VR Counselors at SC Commission for the Blind answer your questions?**

☐ Extremely well

☐ Very well

☐ Moderately well

☐ Slightly well

☐ Not at all well

**2. Was your experience with your VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind better than you expected it to be, worse than you expected it to be, or about what you expected it to be?**

☐ Much better

☐ Somewhat better

☐ Slightly better

☐ About what was expected

☐ Slightly worse

☐ Somewhat worse

☐ Much worse

**3. How well did the VR Counselor representatives at SC Commission for the Blind communicate with you?**

☐ Extremely well

☐ Very well

☐ Moderately well

☐ Slightly well

☐ Not at all well

**4. How strongly do you recommend SC Commission for the Blind's VR Department?**

☐ Extremely strongly

☐ Very strongly

☐ Moderately strongly

☐ Slightly strongly

☐ Not at all strongly

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### Consumer Survey Instrument

**5. How well do you think your VR Counselor understands what you need to be successful?**

- ☐ Extremely well
- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Moderately well
- ☐ Slightly well
- ☐ Not at all well

**6. Overall, are you satisfied with the Vocational Rehabilitation employees at SC Commission for the Blind, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with them, or dissatisfied with them?**

- ☐ Extremely satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Slightly satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Slightly dissatisfied
- ☐ Moderately dissatisfied
- ☐ Extremely dissatisfied

**7. How important does the VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind make you feel?**

- ☐ Extremely important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Moderately important
- ☐ Slightly important
- ☐ Not at all important

**8. What barriers prevented or would prevent you from participating fully in the Vocational Rehabilitation program with the South Carolina Commission for the Blind?**

- ☐ Reduction or Loss of Social Security Benefits
- ☐ Lack of Transportation
- ☐ Lack of Family Support
- ☐ Other

Other (please specify)

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### Consumer Survey Instrument

**9. How long did you have to wait before a VR Counselor representative at SC Commission for the Blind began to help you?**

- ☐ Extremely long
- ☐ Very long
- ☐ Moderately long
- ☐ Slightly long
- ☐ Not at all long

**10. How knowledgeable is your VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind?**

- ☐ Extremely knowledgeable
- ☐ Very knowledgeable
- ☐ Moderately knowledgeable
- ☐ Slightly knowledgeable
- ☐ Not at all knowledgeable

**11. How clear was the information the VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind gave you?**

- ☐ Extremely clear
- ☐ Very clear
- ☐ Moderately clear
- ☐ Slightly clear
- ☐ Not at all clear

**12. Have you received or are you receiving all of the services outlined on your Individualized Plan for Employment?**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### Consumer Survey Instrument

**13. Overall, are you satisfied with your experience using SCCB VR Services, neither satisfied or dissatisfied with them, or dissatisfied with them?**

- ☐ Extremely satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Slightly satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Slightly dissatisfied
- ☐ Moderately dissatisfied
- ☐ Extremely dissatisfied

**14. What changes would most improve SCCB VR Services?**

**15. What do you like most about SCCB VR Services?**

**16. Overall, are you satisfied with your VR Counselor, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with it, or dissatisfied with it?**

- ☐ Extremely satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Slightly satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Slightly dissatisfied
- ☐ Moderately dissatisfied
- ☐ Extremely dissatisfied

**17. How well did SC Commission for the Blind's VR Department help me to use technology?**

- ☐ Extremely well
- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Moderately well
- ☐ Slightly well
- ☐ Not at all well



## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### Consumer Survey Instrument

**18. The SC Commission for the Blind's VR Department helped me make decisions about going to work or keeping my current job.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**19. As a result of SC Commission for the Blind's VR Services, did you find employment?**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**20. Overall, are you satisfied with your employment after having received services from the SC Commission for the Blind, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with your employment, or dissatisfied with your employment?**

- ☐ Extremely satisfied
- ☐ Moderately satisfied
- ☐ Slightly satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Slightly dissatisfied
- ☐ Moderately dissatisfied
- ☐ Extremely dissatisfied

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**Individuals with Significant Disabilities**

From your experience with individuals with significant disabilities, please choose your response and reply about their vocational rehabilitation needs.

**\* 1. Are there services that you feel are needed for this population?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**\*2. Are there barriers to the provision of these services?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

**\*3. What can SCCB or your local office do to improve the provision of services to those with significant disabilities?**

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**Most Significant Disabilities**

From your experience with individuals with most significant disabilities, please choose your response and reply about their vocational rehabilitation needs.

**\*4. Are there services that you feel are needed for this population?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**\*5. Are there barriers to the provision of these services?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

**\*6. What can SCCB or your local office do to improve the provision of services to those with most significant disabilities?**

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**Minorities**

From your experience with minorities, please choose your response and reply about their vocational rehabilitation needs.

**\*7. Are there services that you feel are needed for this population?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**\* 8. Are there barriers to the provision of these services?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

**\* 9. What can SCCB or your local office do to improve the provision of services to minorities who are blind or visually impaired?**

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

VR Counselor Survey Instrument

SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire	
Unserved and Underserved	
<p><b>*10. From your experience , do you believe there are unserved populations of individuals who are blind or visually impaired?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Who do you know that could benefit from our services and are not using them?</p> <div></div>	
<p><b>*11. From your experience , do you believe there are underserved populations of individuals who are blind or visually impaired?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Who do you know that could benefit more from our services?</p> <div></div>	



## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**\* 12. From your experience with underserved individuals, are there services that you feel are needed for this population?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

**\* 13. Are there barriers to the provision of these services?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, what are they?

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

VR Counselor Survey Instrument

**SCCB VR Counselor Questionnaire**

**\* 14. What can SCCB or your local office do to improve the provision of services to underserved individuals who are blind or visually impaired?**

**\* 15. What is your name?**

**\* 16. How long have you work as a VR Counselor with SCCB?**

Years

Please indicate the number of years.

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instruments

#### Key Informant Survey Instrument

##### Key Informant Interview Guide

Date of Interview:

Contact/Key Informant:

Organization/Description:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Interviewer: Don Bradley

- What do you see as the VR service needs for individuals who are blind or visually impaired?
    - What are the barriers to receipt of these services?
    - What can SCCB do to meet this need?
  - What about for those with a significant disability?
    - What are the barriers?
    - What can SCCB do to meet this need?
  - From your experience, do you believe there are unserved populations of blind or visually impaired individuals? (e.g., who do you know that is not using our services and could benefit from them?)
  - From your experience, are there underserved blind or visually impaired populations? (e.g., do you know of anyone that could benefit more from our services?)
  - What do you see as the VR service needs for those who are unserved or underserved?
    - What are the barriers?
    - What can SCCB do to meet this need?
  - Is there a need for supported employment?
    - What are the barriers?
    - What can SCCB do to meet this need?
  - If you look at the entire workforce investment system in the state, are there additional service needs?
    - What are the barriers?
    - What can SCCB do to meet this need?
  - What do you see as the need for establishment, development, and improvement of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs)?
    - What are the barriers?
    - What can SCCB do to meet this need?
  - Is there any other need or gap in our service delivery system you can identify?
-

## APPENDIX C

- American Foundation for the Blind, "Statistical Snapshots from the American Foundation for the Blind." Last modified January, 2013. (Accessed April 12, 2013)

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- Prevent Blindness America, "Vision Problems in the U.S.: Prevalence of Adult Vision Impairment and Age-Related Eye Disease in America." Last modified 2012. (Accessed April 12, 2013)

<http://www.visionproblemsus.org/index.html>

- United States Bureau of the Census, "American FactFinder." (Accessed April 12, 2013)

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

- American Community Survey (ACS), <http://factfinder.census.gov>

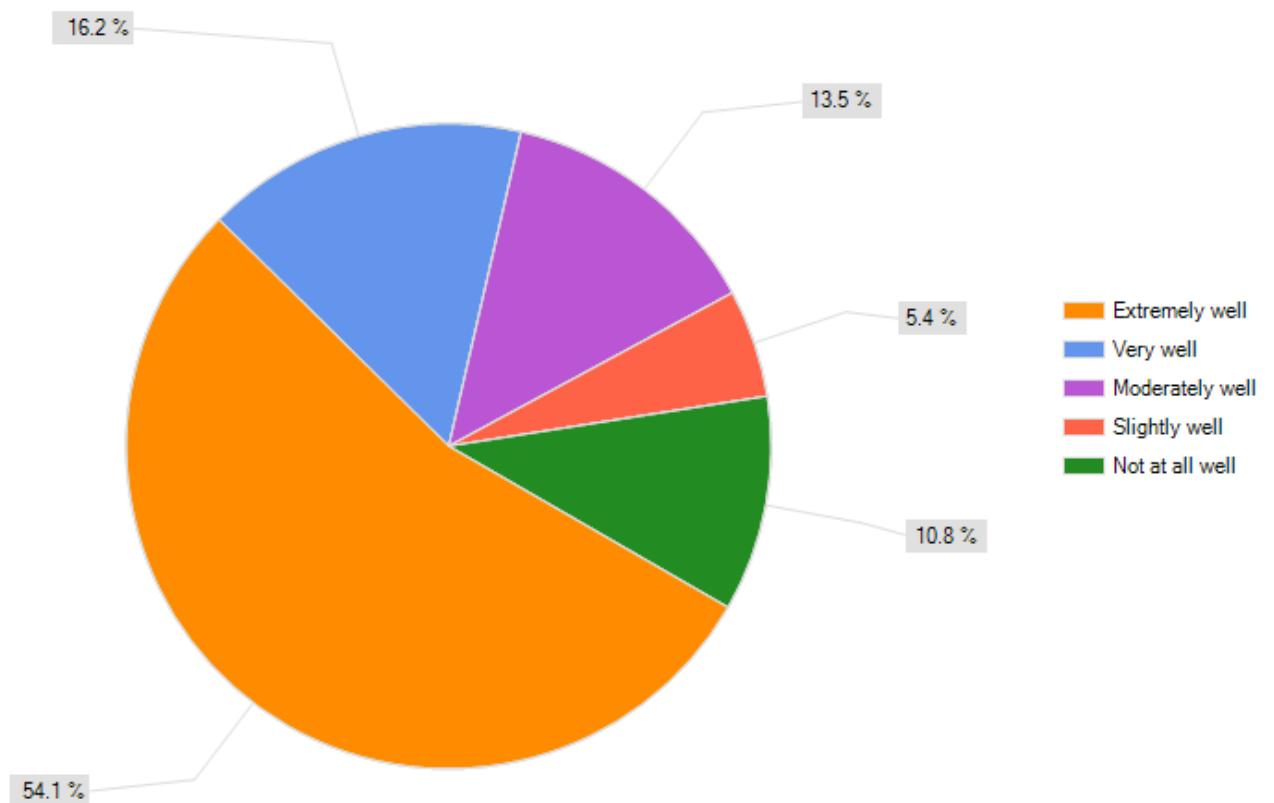
Data Source	Description	Web Address
Table S1801	Disability characteristics	<a href="http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&amp;-qr_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S1801&amp;-geo_id=01000US&amp;-ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&amp;-state=st&amp;-_lang=en&amp;-format=&gt;">http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&amp;-qr_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S1801&amp;-geo_id=01000US&amp;-ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&amp;-state=st&amp;-_lang=en&amp;-format=&gt;</a> (US 2007 Table – change geography for state)
Table S1802	Selected characteristics for civilian non-institutionalized population by disability status	<a href="http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&amp;-geo_id=01000US&amp;-qr_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S1802&amp;-ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&amp;-_lang=en&amp;-redoLog=false&amp;-state=st&amp;-format=&amp;-CONTEXT=st&gt;">http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&amp;-geo_id=01000US&amp;-qr_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_S1802&amp;-ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&amp;-_lang=en&amp;-redoLog=false&amp;-state=st&amp;-format=&amp;-CONTEXT=st&gt;</a> (US 2007 Table – change geography for state)
Tables C18020 and version s A-I	Non-institutionalized people with a disability and not employed, age 6-64, by race and ethnicity, by state	<a href="http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&amp;state=dt&amp;mt_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G2000_C18020&amp;-_lang=en&amp;-ts=266419110891&gt;">http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G00_&amp;state=dt&amp;mt_name=ACS_2007_1YR_G2000_C18020&amp;-_lang=en&amp;-ts=266419110891&gt;</a> (Insert state in geography)

- Cornell Disability Statistics Center 2007 Disability Status Reports,  
<<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/DisabilityStatistics/>>
- Disability Planning Data, Substrate and state estimates of disability from the ACS; People in the labor force, not working,  
<<http://www.disabilityplanningdata.com>>
- Current Population Survey (CPS)
  - <<http://www.census.gov/cps/>>
    - Employment status of civilian non-institutional population by sex, age and disability status  
 <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsdisability.htm>>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
  - <<http://www.bls.gov/>>
    - Unemployment rates by state, current and historical  
 <<http://data.bls.gov/map/servlet/map.servlet.MapToolServlet?survey=la>>

## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #1

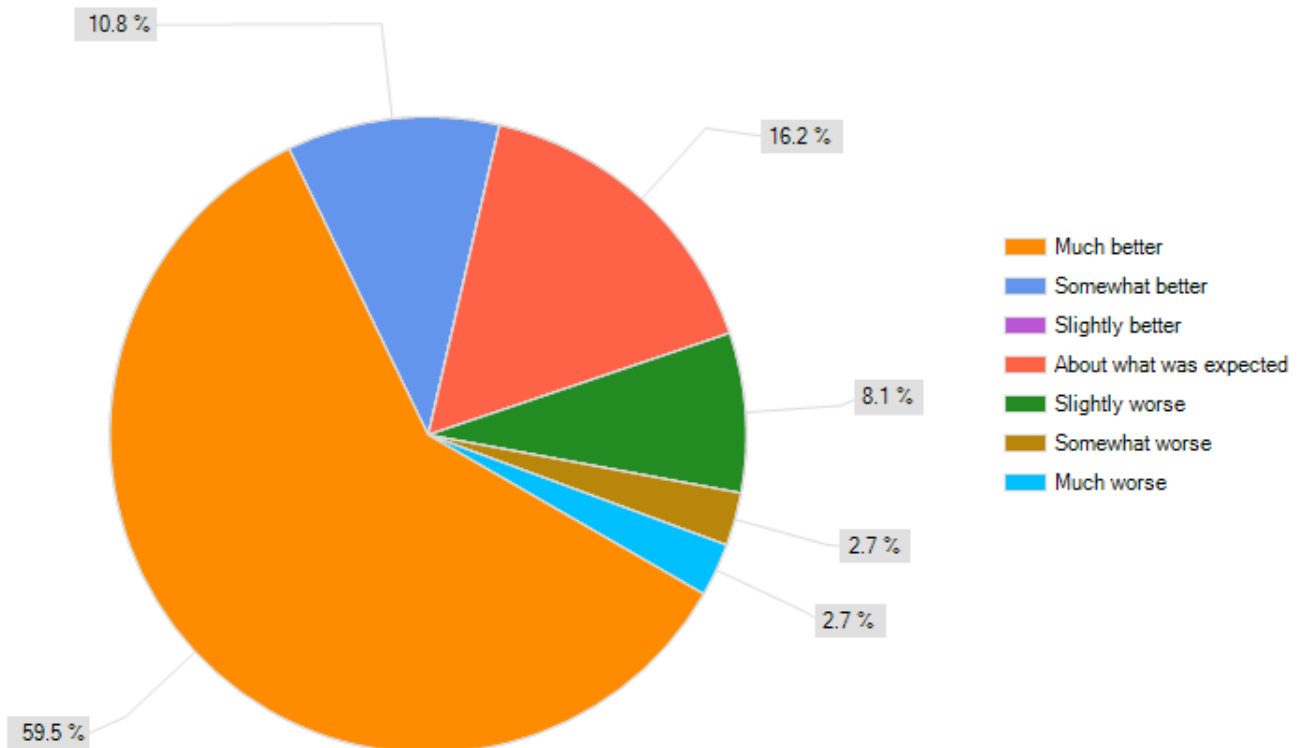
**How well do the VR Counselors at SC Commission for the Blind answer your questions?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #2

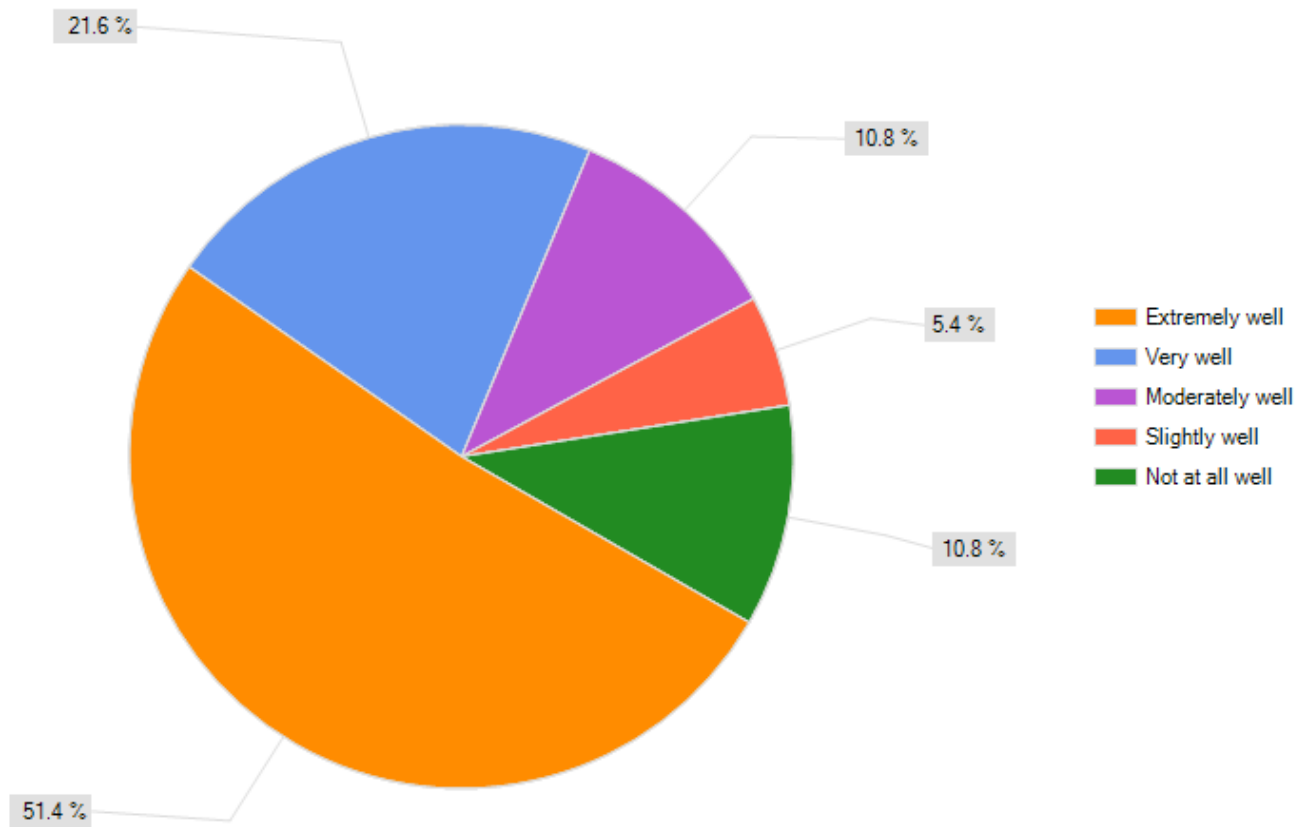
**Was your experience with your VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind better than you expected it to be, worse than you expected it to be, or about what you expected it to be?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #3

**How well did the VR Counselor representatives at SC Commission for the Blind communicate with you?**

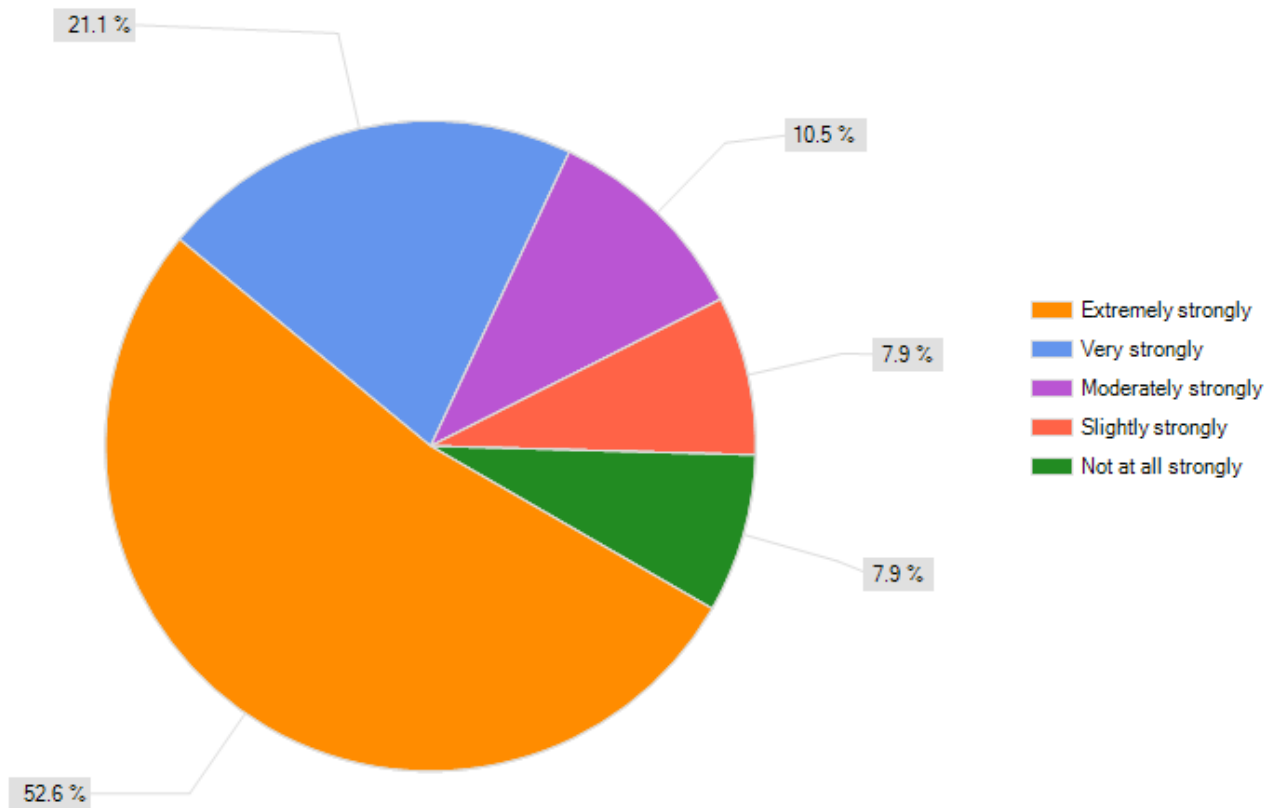




## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #4

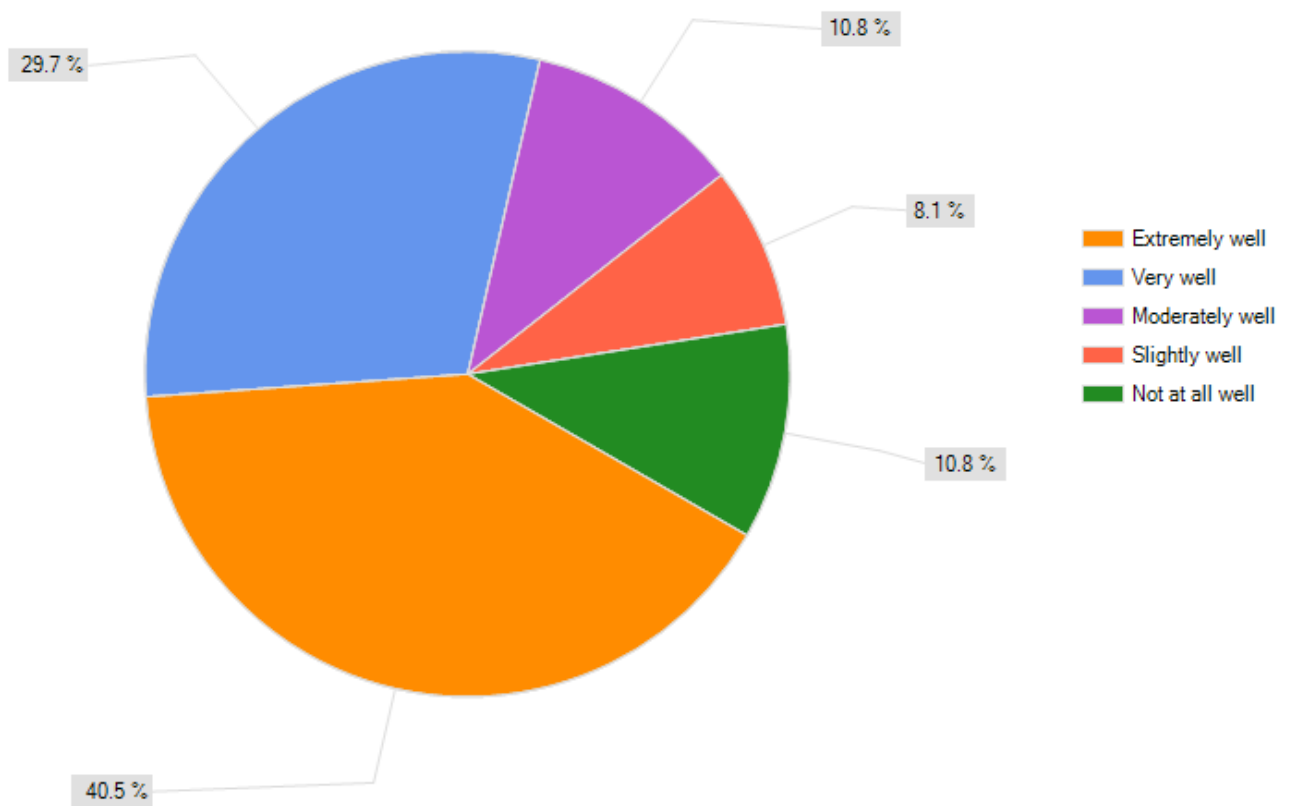
**How strongly do you recommend SC Commission for the Blind's VR Department?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #5

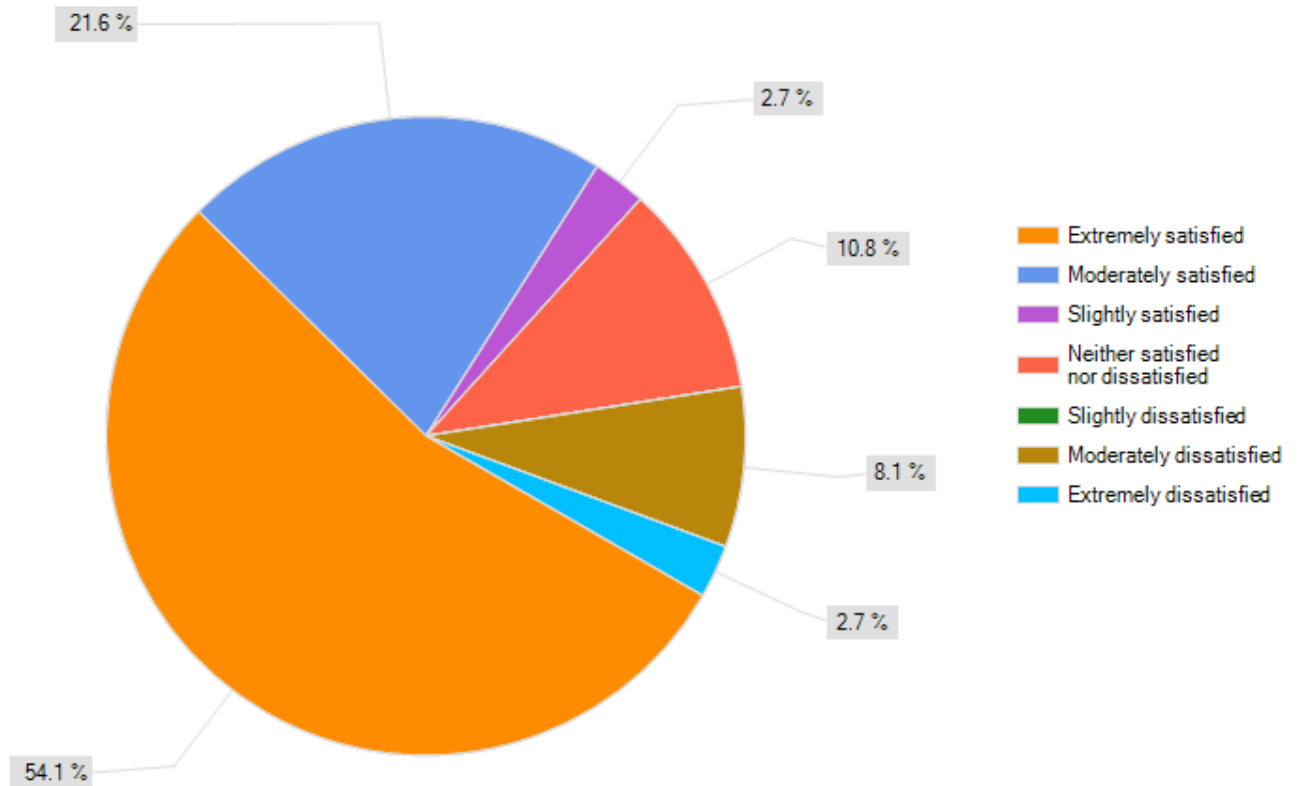
**How well do you think your VR Counselor understands what you need to be successful?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #6

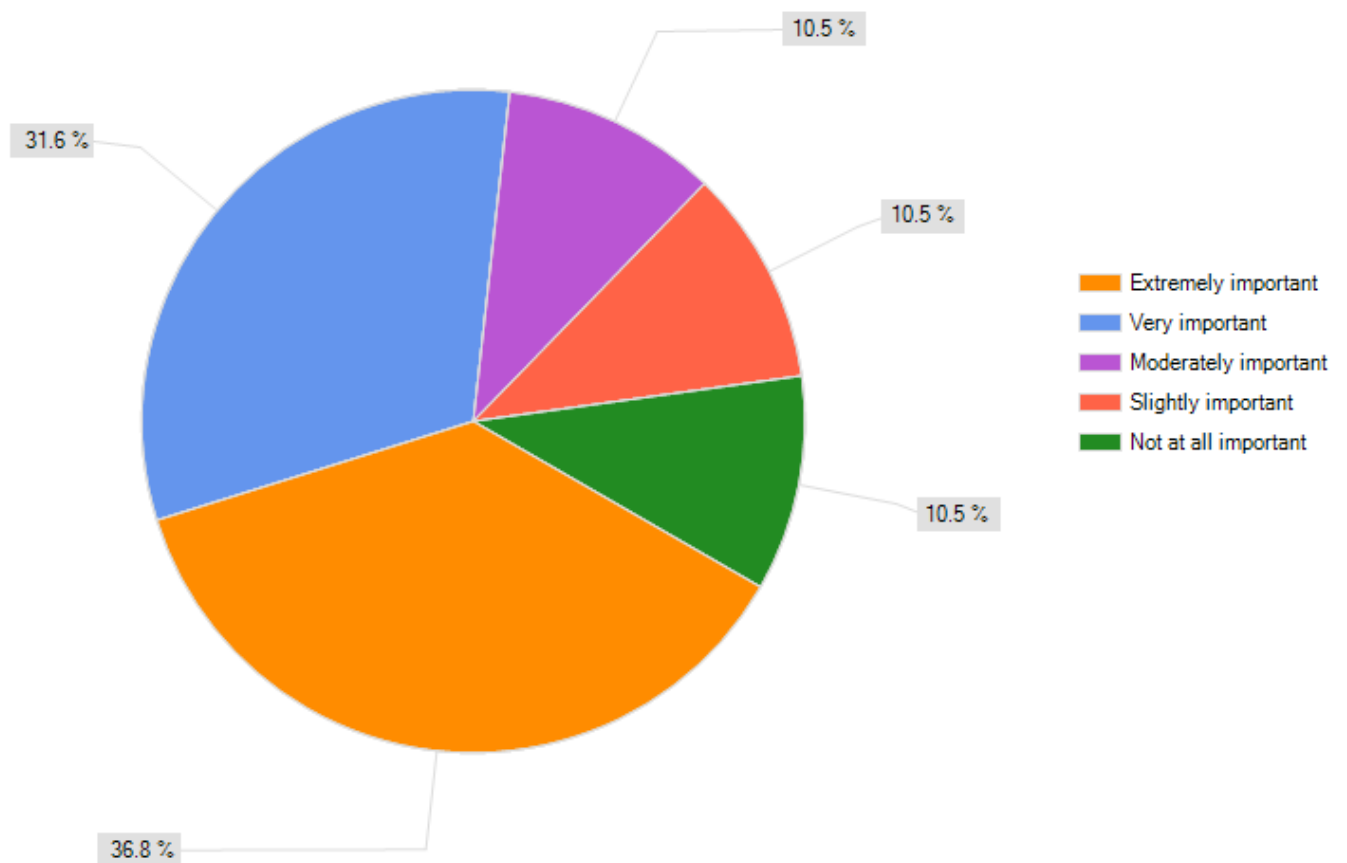
**Overall, are you satisfied with the Vocational Rehabilitation employees at SC Commission for the Blind, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with them, or dissatisfied with them?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #7

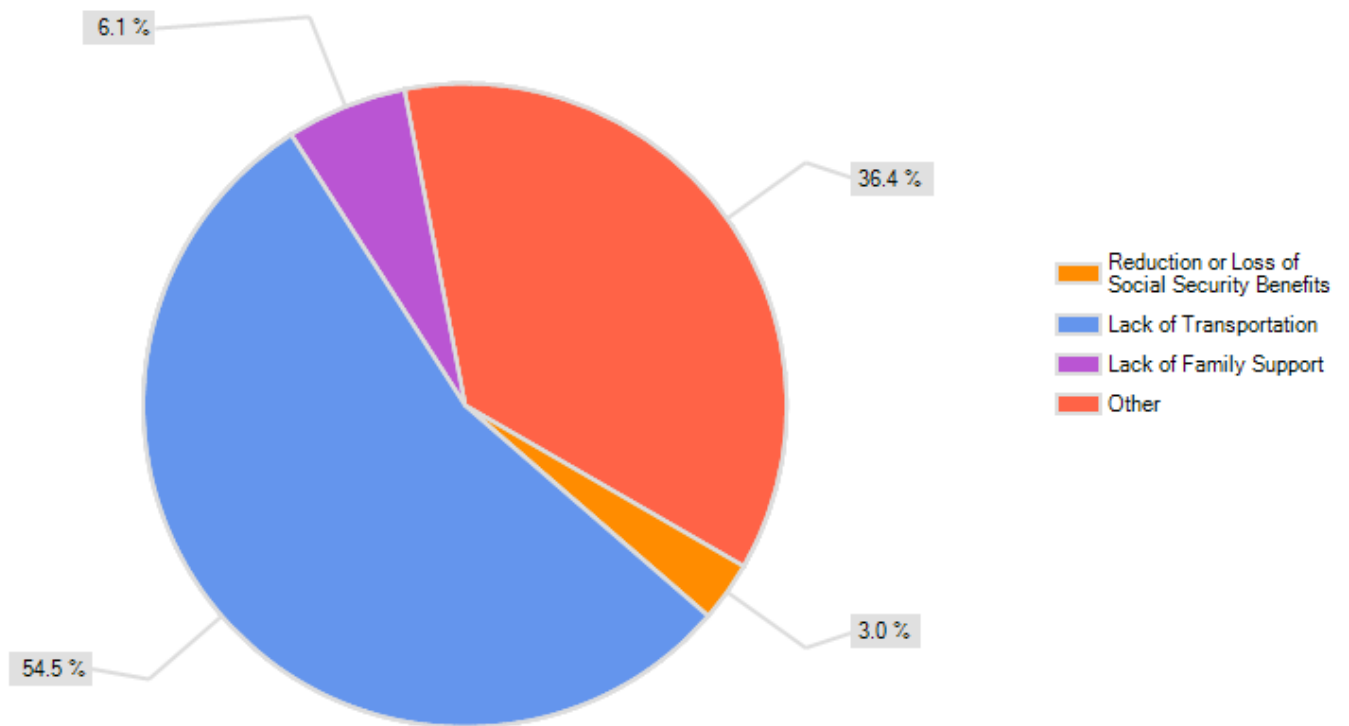
**How important does the VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind make you feel?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #8

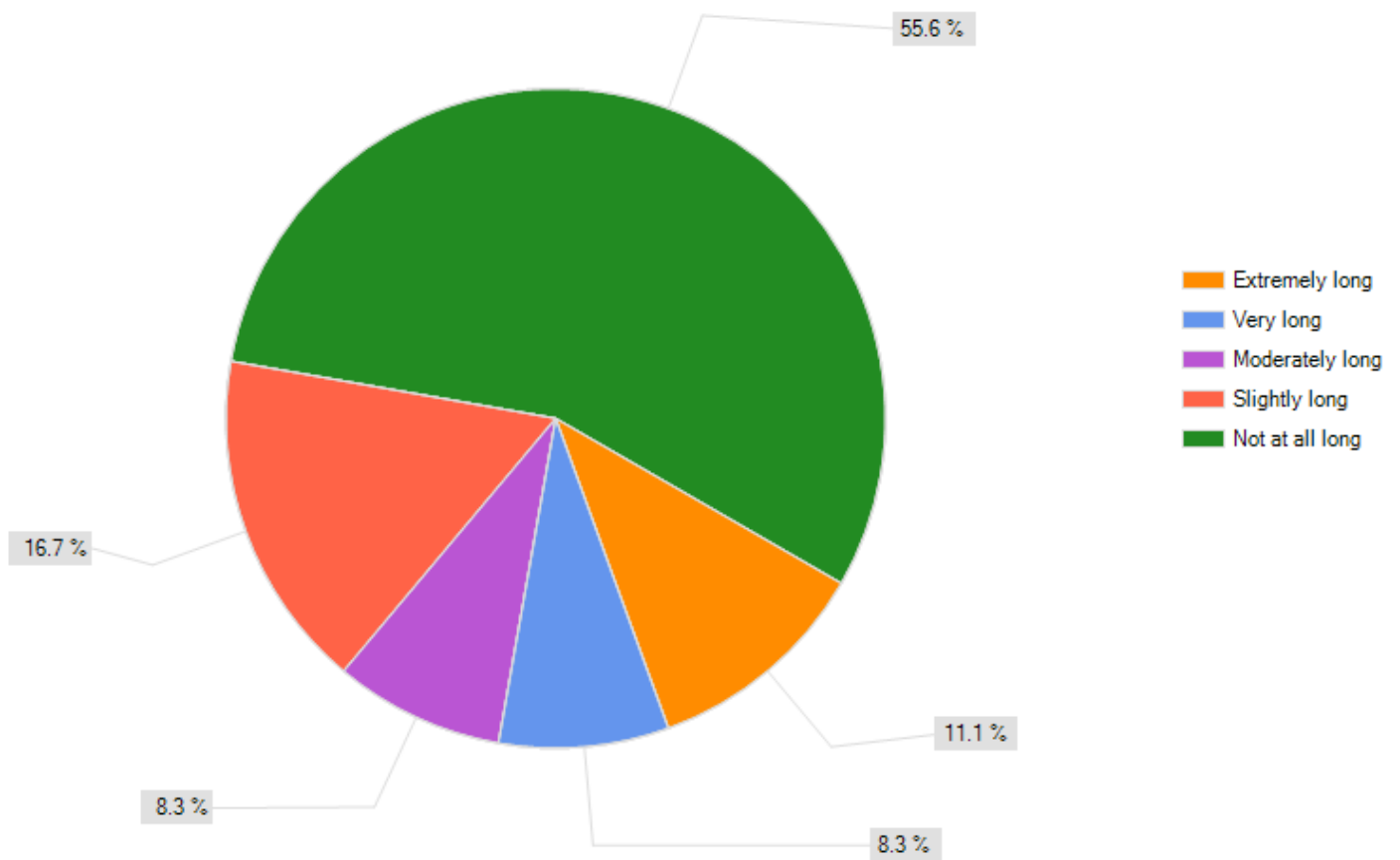
**What barriers prevented or would prevent you from participating fully in the Vocational Rehabilitation program with the South Carolina Commission for the Blind?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #9

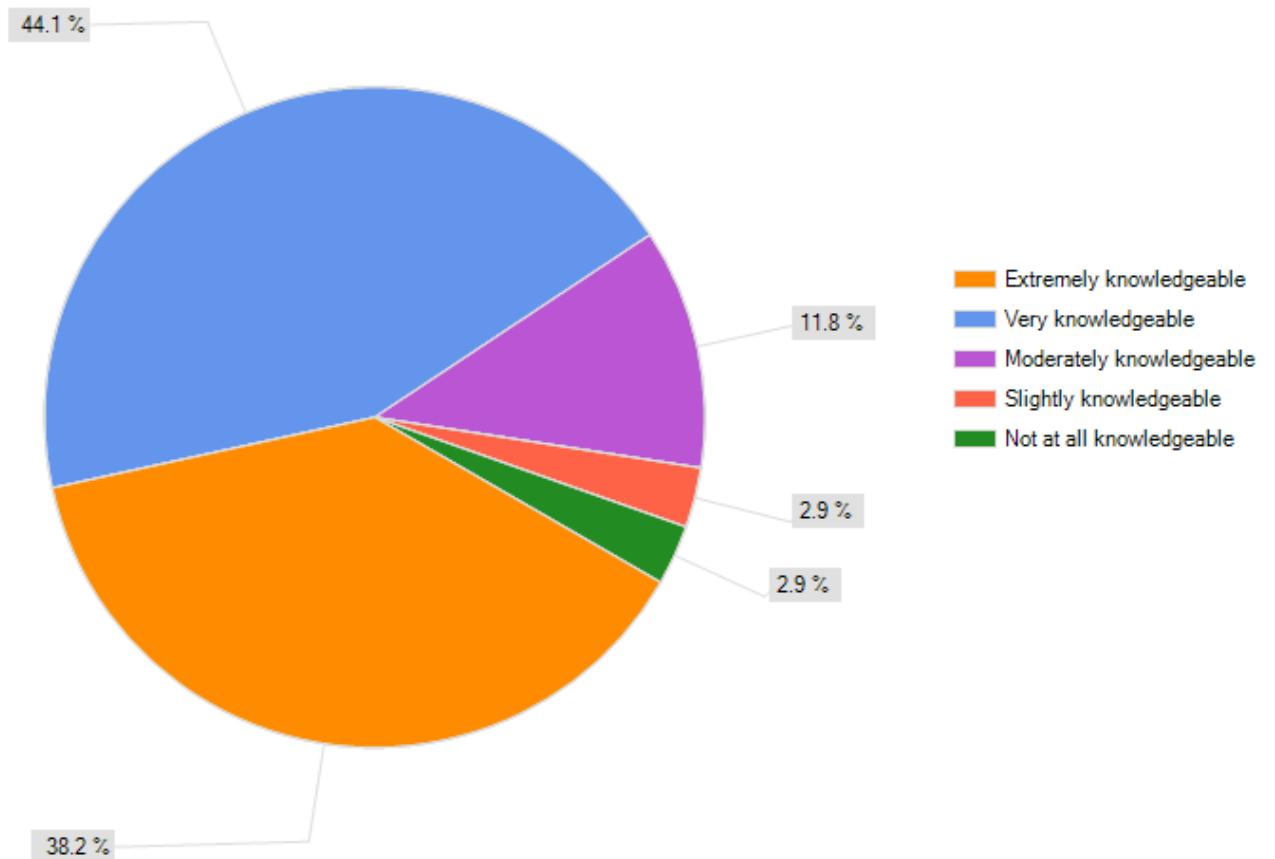
**How long did you have to wait before a VR Counselor representative at SC Commission for the Blind began to help you?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #10

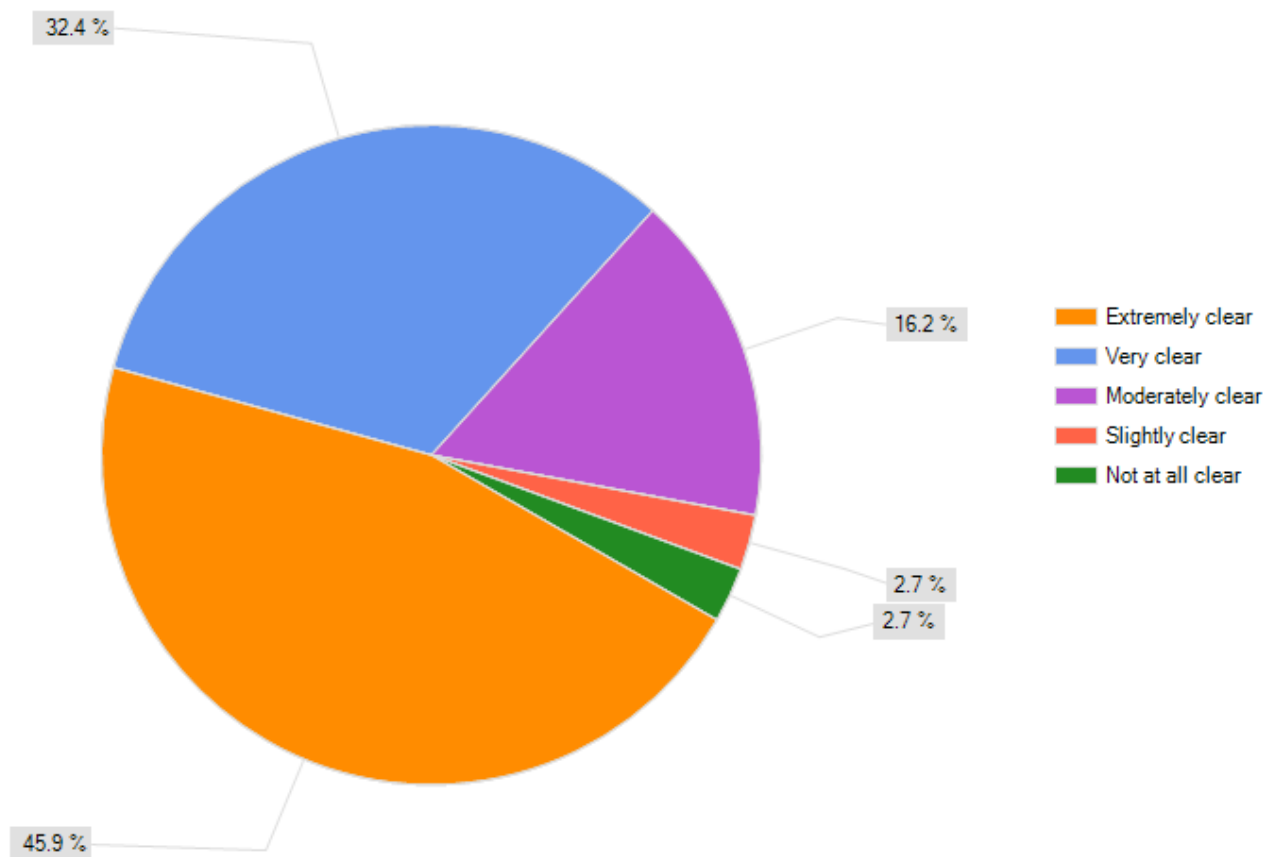
**How knowledgeable is your VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #11

**How clear was the information the VR Counselor at SC Commission for the Blind gave you?**

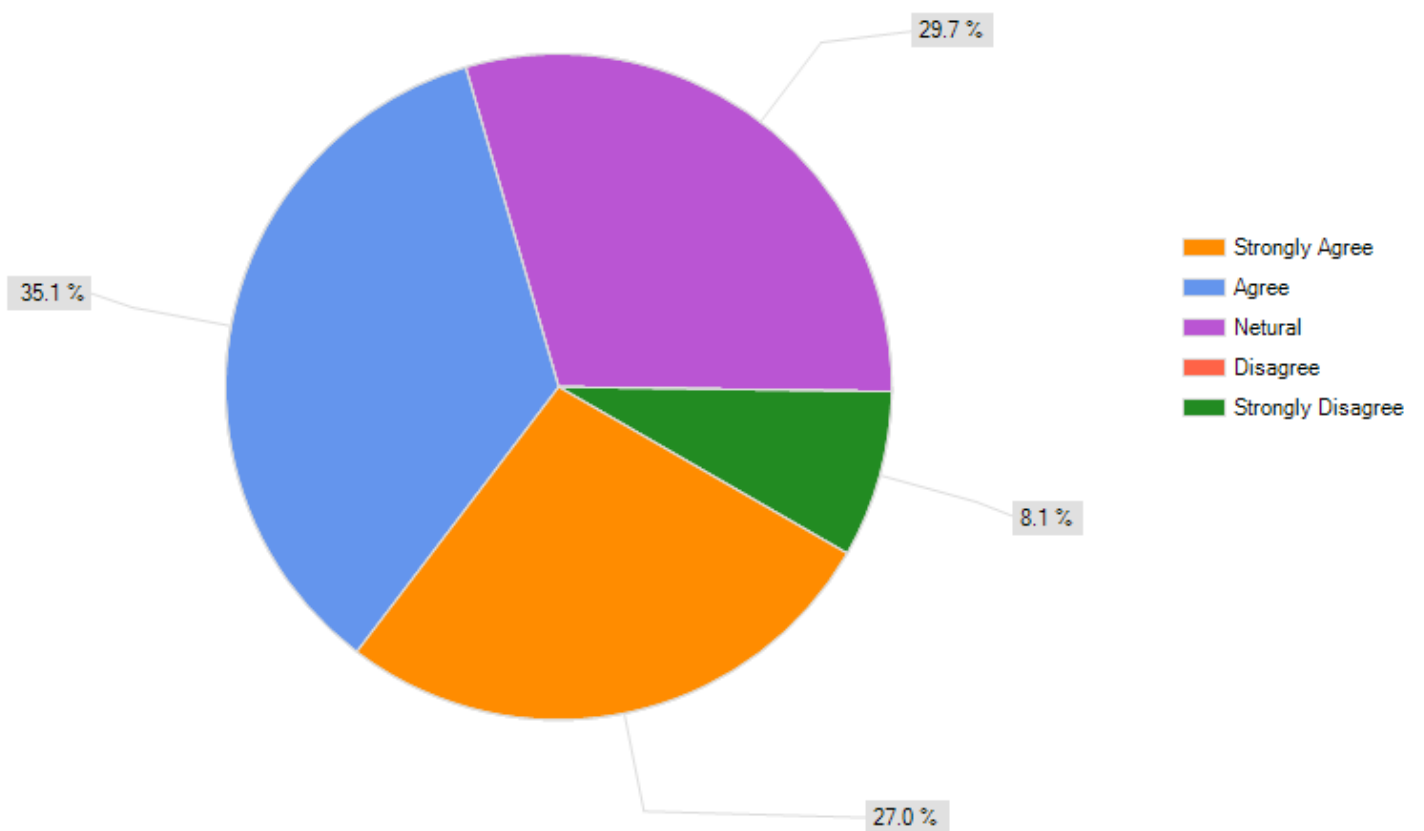




## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #12

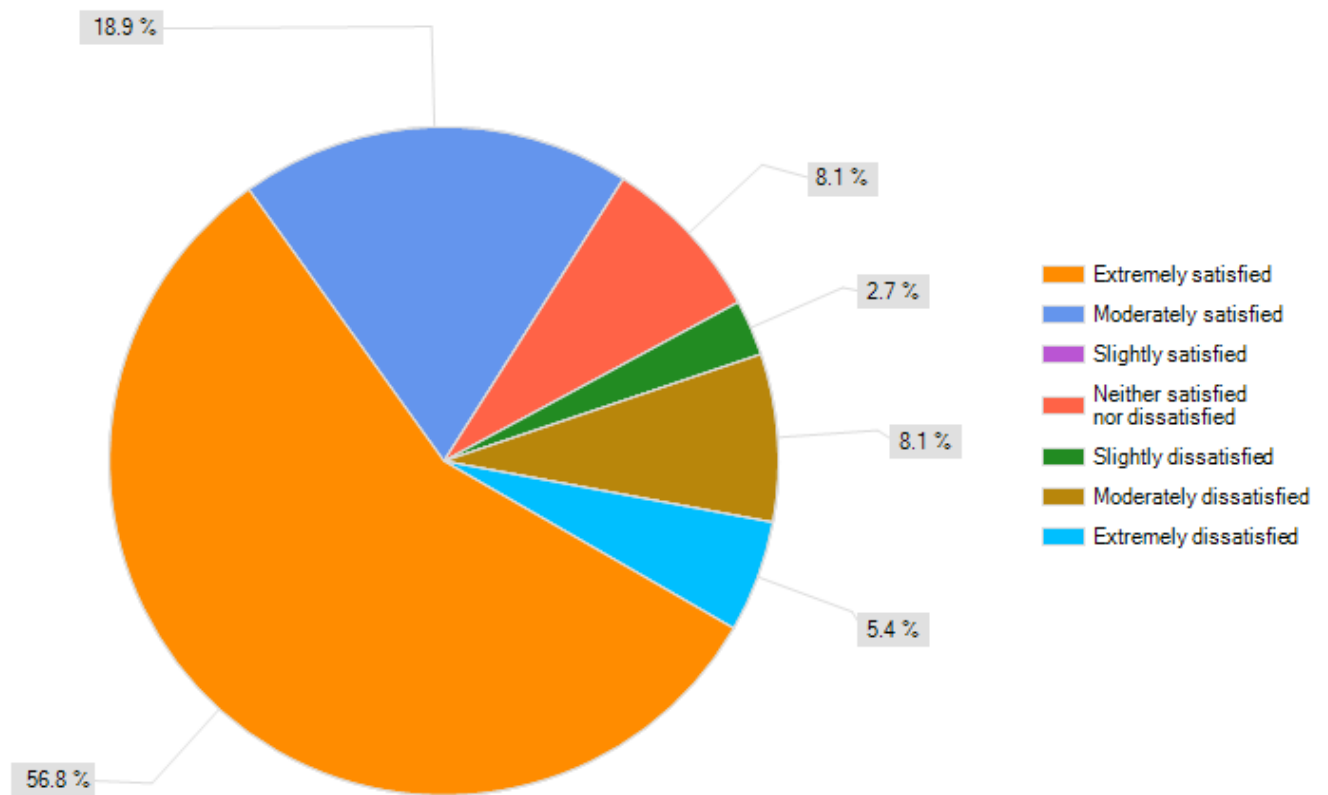
**Have you received or are you receiving all of the services outlined on your Individualized Plan for Employment?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #13

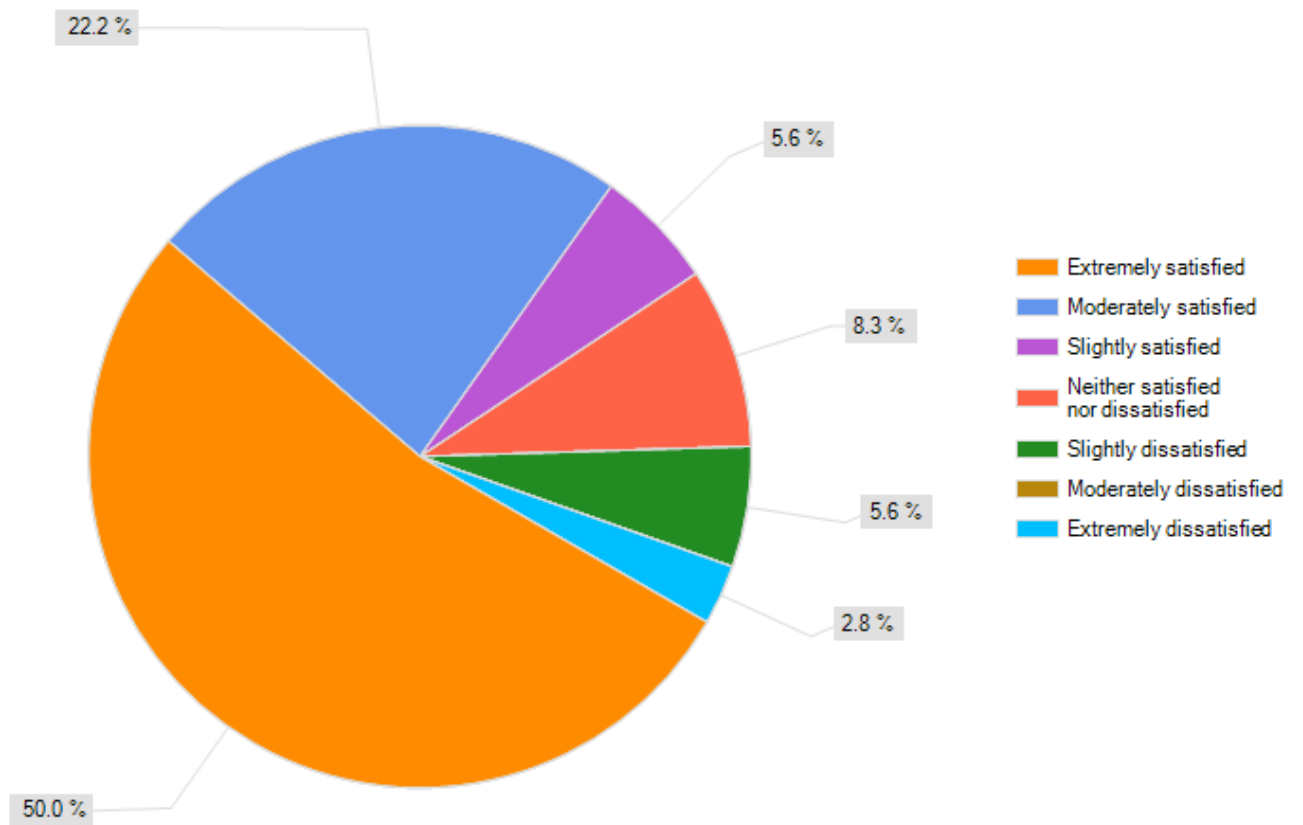
Overall, are you satisfied with your experience using SCCB VR Services, neither satisfied or dissatisfied with them, or dissatisfied with them?



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #14

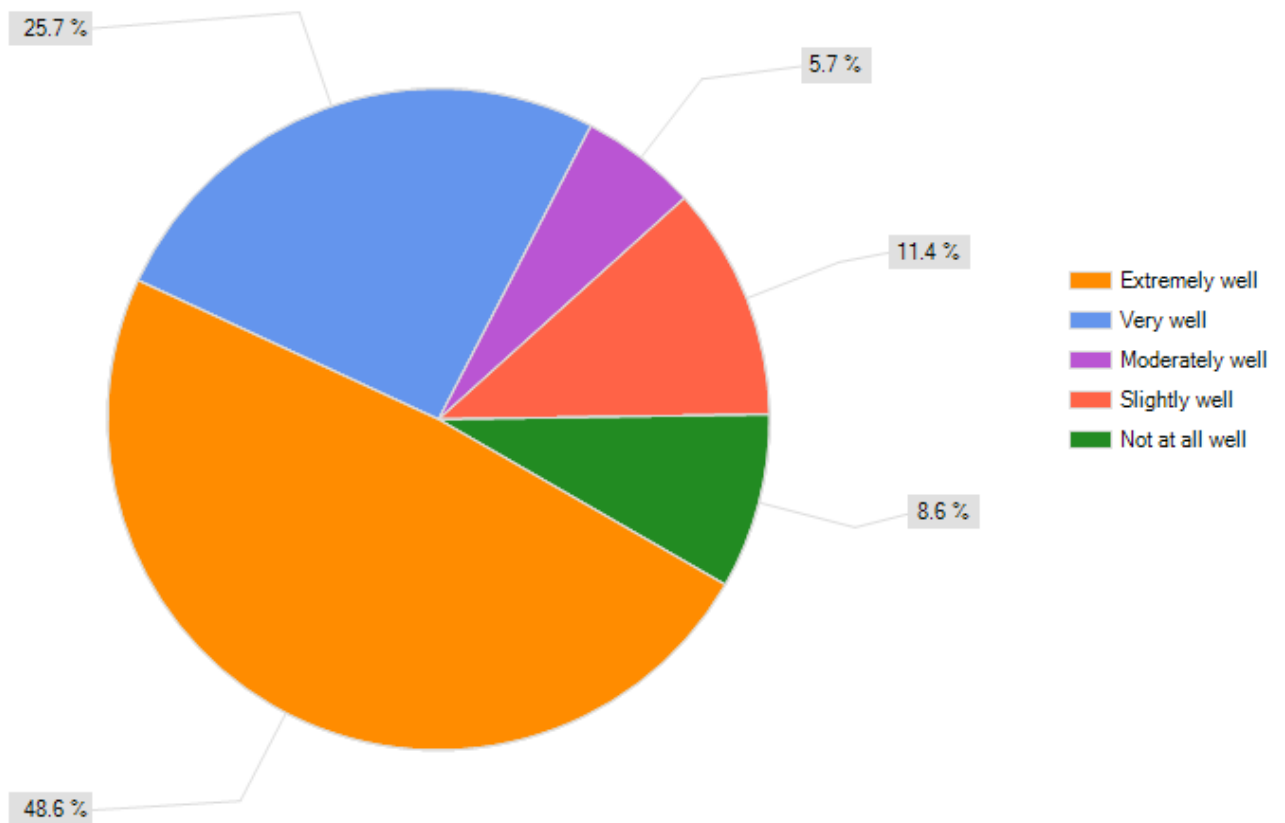
**Overall, are you satisfied with your VR Counselor, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with it, or dissatisfied with it?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #15

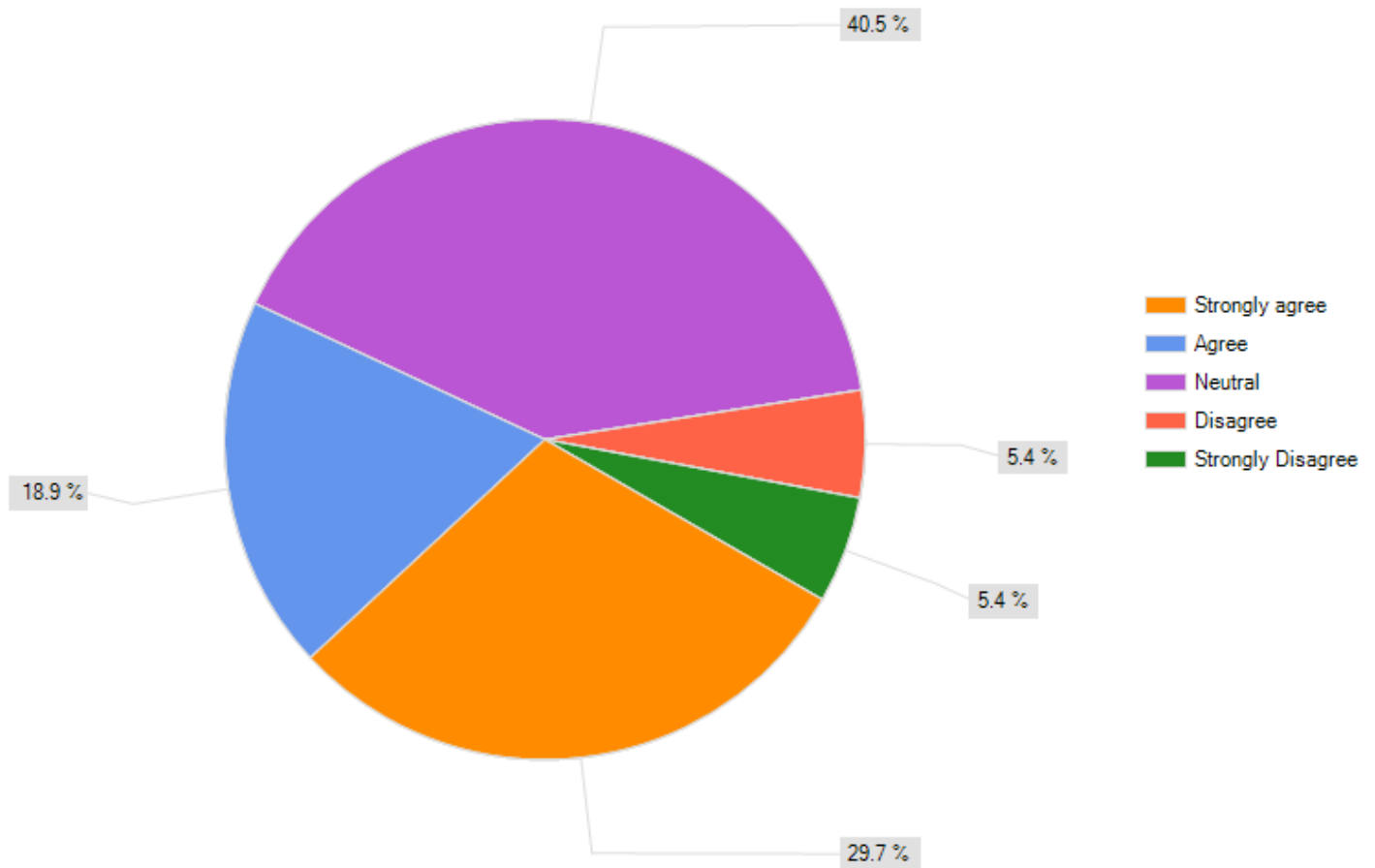
**How well did SC Commission for the Blind's VR Department help me to use technology?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #16

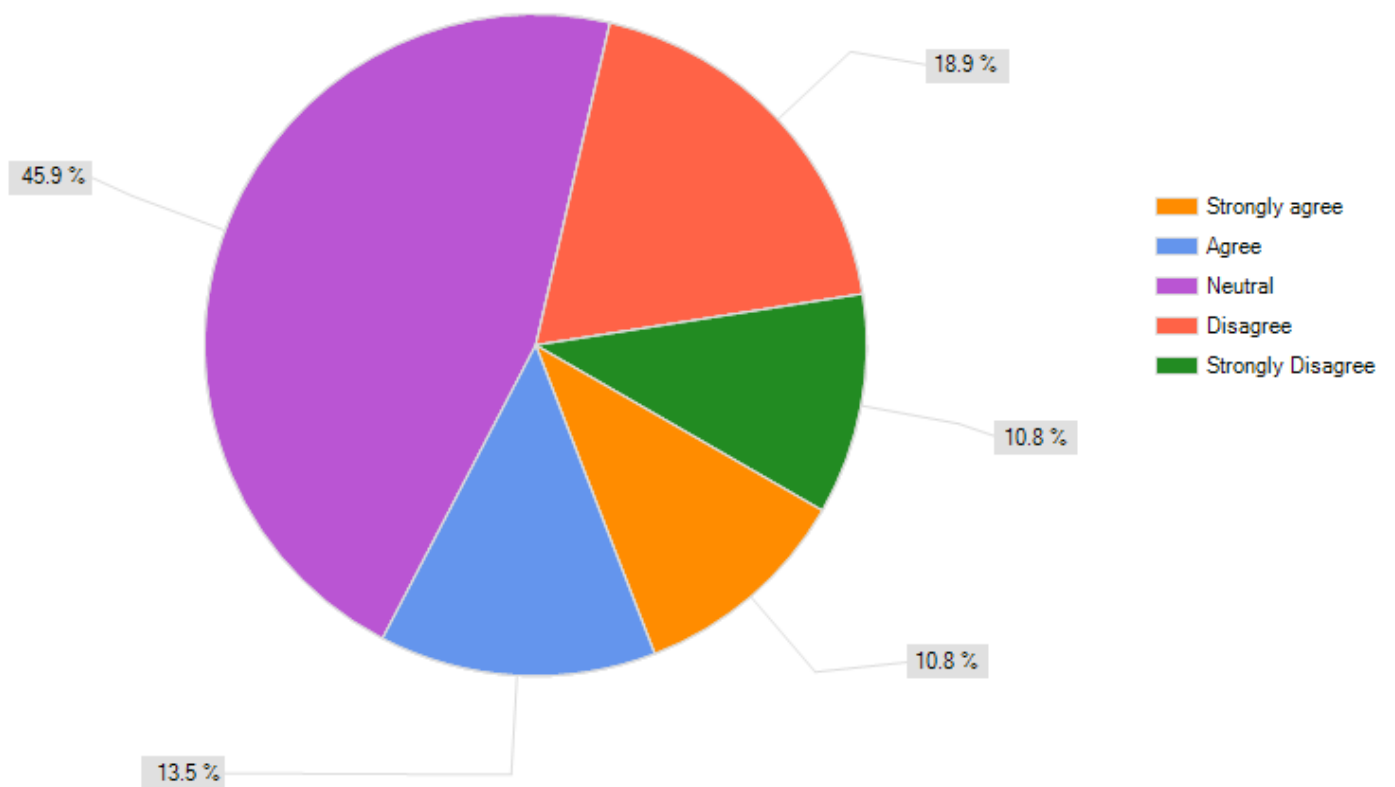
**The SC Commission for the Blind's VR Department helped me make decisions about going to work or keeping my current job.**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #17

**As a result of SC Commission for the Blind's VR Services, did you find employment?**



## APPENDIX D

### Consumer Survey Question #18

**Overall, are you satisfied with your employment after having received services from the SC Commission for the Blind, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with your employment, or dissatisfied with your employment?**

